



IPBES-4 HIGHLIGHTS: 22 FEBRUARY 2016

The Fourth Session of the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES-4) opened on Monday, 22 February 2016 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. In the morning, delegates heard opening statements, addressed organizational matters and heard reports on progress in implementing the Platform's work programme.

In the afternoon, delegates attended a formal opening ceremony, followed by a plenary discussion on: the thematic assessment on pollinators, pollination and food production; the methodological assessment on scenarios and modeling; capacity building; indigenous and local knowledge (ILK); and the scoping report for a global assessment on biodiversity and ecosystem services.

In the evening, delegates attended a reception hosted by the Government of Malaysia.

OPENING SESSION

IPBES Chair Abdul Hamid Zakri (Malaysia) welcomed and congratulated delegates for "having come full circle," since establishing the Platform and described the two thematic assessments before IPBES-4 as "the first fruits of our labor."

Executive Secretary Anne Larigauderie, welcomed delegates reporting on *inter alia*: approximately 1000 experts mobilized to support biodiversity assessments; completion of assessments on pollinators and scenarios, four scoping reports, two catalogues and two guides; and progress in capacity building, ILK, and in the open-ended network of stakeholders.

OPENING STATEMENTS: Speakers commended the completion of the first two assessments. Mexico, on behalf of the LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN GROUP (GRULAC), underscored that IPBES will make valuable contributions to achieving the theme of the thirteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP13) "mainstreaming biodiversity for welfare."

South Africa, for the AFRICAN GROUP, underscored capacity building, but cautioned against web-based seminars and e-conferences as participation is limited to those who do not have "bandwidth problems."

The Netherlands, on behalf of THE EU MEMBER STATES THAT ARE MEMBERS OF IPBES (EU IPBES MEMBERS), called for agreement on conducting a global assessment with the highest standard of work. Turkey, for EASTERN EUROPE, urged achieving regional balance.

The US emphasized that Summaries for Policy Makers (SPMs) should adhere to IPBES' principles of scientific independence and credibility, and supported practical timelines "even if some assessments would be pushed to the next work programme."

STAKEHOLDERS *inter alia*: welcomed the implementation of the conflict of interest policy; underlined the importance of a wide range of expertise and knowledge in the IPBES work programme; and recalled the precautionary approach.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: Chair Zakri welcomed the United Arab Emirates' recent accession. Regarding the agenda, he suggested that CBD Executive Secretary Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias present on the CBD's plans to use IPBES products. Delegates adopted the agenda and organization of work (IPBES/4/1 and Add.1) and approved a list of 25 new observers to be admitted to IPBES-4.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY: IPBES Executive Secretary Anne Larigauderie introduced the report on the implementation of the work programme for 2014-2018 (IPBES/4/2), informing of progress made on the implementation of deliverables on four IPBES objectives. She outlined lessons learnt, including in: engaging social science experts and ILK holders in regional assessments; funding constraints for the participation of experts from developing countries; and the use of electronic conferences to scope future assessments.

The EU IPBES MEMBERS stressed the importance of the draft set of indicators proposed by the Knowledge and Data Task Force (IPBES/4/INF/7) for linking regional and global assessments.

The AFRICAN GROUP called for further support through the technical support unit (TSU) on capacity building. ETHIOPIA urged for regional balance in the fellowship programme and called for clarification on the online matchmaking facility. CANADA noted that the work programme is financially over ambitious and welcomed the increased efficiency and cost saving of e-conferencing. GHANA suggested an evaluation of the effectiveness of e-conferencing.

SWITZERLAND said that IPBES products should be credible and of high quality. Emphasizing quality over quantity, AUSTRALIA proposed prioritizing fewer activities. NORWAY suggested considering existing modalities and legal obligations of states to indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs).

IUCN expressed concern regarding the slow progress on crucially important and severely under-sourced functions of IPBES. UN DIVISION FOR OCEAN AFFAIRS AND THE LAW OF THE SEA (DOALOS) highlighted the release of its First World Ocean Assessment in December 2015, saying that it identifies gaps and supports science-policy interfaces. He noted the potential for synergies between the next phase of the regular process and IPBES' global assessment.

FUTURE EARTH praised the increasing engagement of new stakeholders and IPLCs, noting that it is a sign of success in implementing the work programme. She noted Future Earth's readiness to strengthen their collaboration with IPBES, in particular with capacity building.



The INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS FORUM ON BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES (IIFBES) informed that they have established “Centers of Distinction” to assist in monitoring and implementation of the Platform’s work.

CBD Executive Secretary Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias said that the pollination assessment will be the first test case on how IPBES and the CBD can enhance the science-policy interface. He stated that regional assessments and the global assessment will be stepping stones for countries setting biodiversity targets beyond 2020, but underscored that any delay in delivering the global assessment will compromise the impact of the assessment on the CBD.

OPENING CEREMONY

Datuk Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar, Malaysian Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, welcomed delegates back to Malaysia, seven years after the first Ad-Hoc Intergovernmental and Multi-stakeholder meeting.

Ibrahim Thiaw, Deputy Executive Director, UNEP, noted that IPBES’ cross-cutting approach will benefit all aspects of achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with respect to biodiversity and ecosystem services. He urged IPBES to take this momentum and carry it forward.

Najib Razak, Prime Minister of Malaysia, formally opened IPBES-4, welcoming delegates and underscoring the importance of collaboration between governments and natural and social scientists to achieve the right balance between protecting the environment while ensuring social and economic progress and poverty eradication. Noting his country’s obligations under the CBD and efforts to implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals adopted in 2015, he informed of Malaysia’s revised national policy on biological diversity for 2016-2025, which involves a wide range of stakeholders.

PLENARY

IPBES WORK PROGRAMME 2014-2018: Thematic Assessment on Pollinators, Pollination and Food Production:

Alfred Oteng-Yeboah, IPBES-4 Session Chair, reminded delegates that the assessment reports and SPM’s are still confidential and that no content should be disclosed outside of the IPBES Plenary while the documents are still under negotiation. IPBES Executive Secretary Anne Larigauderie introduced the pollination assessment report (IPBES/4/INF/1) and presented the process followed in its production. She noted the comments received during the peer review process and responses will be published online once the assessment report is approved. She also introduced the related SPM (IPBES/4/3).

IPBES Chair Zakri then invited the Co-Chairs of the assessment report, Simon Potts, University of Reading, UK, and Vera Imperatriz-Fonseca, University of São Paulo, Brazil, to the podium. Potts presented a summary of the key findings of the assessment.

Delegates welcomed the report and the SPM, lauding the work of the authors, and conducted an initial exchange of views. Most parties made general comments with regard to the quality and style of the SPM and its key messages, with some making interventions on specific issues.

MALAYSIA and PAKISTAN called for a strategy for communicating the assessment to the wider public, once it is approved. BRAZIL expressed hope that the assessment would promote awareness on pollinators.

Scenarios and Models of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services: IPBES Executive Secretary Anne Larigauderie introduced the technical report (IPBES/4/INF/3) and presented the process that was followed in its production. She also introduced the related SPM (IPBES/4/4). IPBES-4 Session Chair Oteng-Yeboah invited the Co-Chairs of the thematic report, Simon Ferrier, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research

Organisation (CSIRO), Australia, and Karachepon Ninan, Centre for Economics, Environment and Society, India, to the podium. Ferrier presented a summary of the key findings of the methodological assessment.

Delegates conducted an initial exchange of views. Noting the technical nature of the assessment, INDIA, with INDONESIA, advised clear distinction between guidance for science and guidance for policy. MOROCCO said the assessment should be further refined through continued work. CANADA, the US and AUSTRALIA said future work should be justified by available funds.

Capacity Building/Indigenous Knowledge Systems: The Secretariat introduced the documents on capacity building (IPBES/4/6 and IPBES/4/INF/5) and ILK (IPBES/4/7 and IPBES/4/INF/6), noting that these items would be considered jointly in plenary. On ILK, the US said that since procedures for incorporating ILK into IPBES’ work will serve as a model for many organizations, they should be carefully crafted. MEXICO urged focus on the existing link between ILK and intellectual property. NEW ZEALAND noted that the current process allows for ILK participation, but does not yet ensure “open and equal engagement” with ILK due to the dominance of western knowledge systems. The EU IPBES MEMBERS said that for true progress to be made, ILK should be mainstreamed at the national level. JAPAN requested further clarification on the process for nominating ILK holders. Noting that it is difficult to detach ILK from biodiversity-related issues, the AFRICAN GROUP supported further work and piloting of ILK approaches.

Scoping Report for a Global Assessment on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services: Paul Leadley, Université de Paris-Sud, introduced the scoping report (IPBES/4/8) and the note by the Secretariat on the scoping process (IPBES/4/INF/8).

Chair Oteng-Yeboah informed delegates that consideration of the scoping report for a global assessment would continue on Tuesday.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Delegates arriving at Kuala Lumpur’s Convention Center to the opening of IPBES-4 expressed mixed emotions, ranging from enthusiasm to anticipation. One delegate, reminiscing about the early years leading to IPBES’ formation, expressed satisfaction in achievements so far saying “returning to Malaysia after seven years to witness the completion the first assessments is highly symbolic.”

After the first exchange of views on the pollinators and scenario assessments, one seasoned delegate cautioned “we should not be counting our chickens before they have hatched,” noting that some of the diverging opinions might be difficult to reconcile.

During the evening reception, several participants welcomed the important link between the foreseen IPBES global assessment and work under the CBD made throughout the day. Many agreed that at a minimum the global assessment was important to retain even if other parts of the work programme may have to be postponed to avoid sacrificing quality due to limited funding. Anticipating troublesome budget discussions to commence on Tuesday, one delegate said “since we agreed to a work programme we should stick to it. Postponing parts of it could send a wrong signal.” Mindful of the “homework” provided by IPBES-4 Session Chair Alfred Oteng-Yeboah, she said “we better be ready to make pledges tomorrow.”