



IPBES-4 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 2016

IPBES-4 delegates met in two contact groups throughout the day. Contact Group I finalized the negotiation of the summary for policy makers (SPM) of the assessment on pollination, pollinators and food production and began its work on indigenous and local knowledge (ILK) systems.

Contact Group II considered a revised draft of the scoping report for a global assessment on biodiversity and ecosystem services, and started paragraph-by-paragraph negotiations of the SPM for the methodological assessment on scenarios and modeling of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Discussions in both contact groups continued into the night.

CONTACT GROUP I

POLLINATION ASSESSMENT: Contact group Co-Chair Bob Watson (UK) called on delegates to consider revised text.

The group continued in their line-by-line consideration of the SPM. Delegates clarified some paragraphs in the key messages of the document, and the background section of the SPM, including on drivers of change and policy and management options. In discussion with the lead authors, delegates made minor changes and qualifications to ensure factual correctness, and consistency with the main assessment report.

In the key messages section, delegates worked on finalizing paragraphs on: strategic responses to the risks and opportunities associated with pollinators and pollination; features of current intensive agricultural practices; practices based on ILK, in co-production with science as a source of solutions to current challenges; the risk to pollinators from pesticides; options for decreasing exposure of pollinators to pesticides; the threat of diseases to the health of honey bees, bumble bees and solitary bees; and changed ranges, abundances and seasonal activities of some wild pollinators in response to observed climate change.

In the background section of the document, under drivers of change and policy and management options, delegates concluded negotiations of a paragraph on the potential risk from genetically modified organisms (GMOs) for insect pollinators, relying mostly on the agreement reached in informal discussions on Wednesday evening.

Delegates also finalized key findings regarding the risks from pesticides, in particular insecticides such as neonicotinoids and the role of biocultural diversity in supporting diversity and abundance of pollinators, based on text describing the underlying evidence, which had been prepared in informal discussions on Wednesday and revised by the chapter lead authors on Thursday morning.

During lunch, delegates considered and agreed, as amended, to a table providing an overview of strategic responses to risks and opportunities associated with pollinators and pollination. They also agreed, with minor editorial changes, to an appendix, including key elements of the Platform's conceptual framework and terms that are central to understanding the summary, and an appendix on communication of the degree of confidence. The contact group then agreed to forward the SPM to plenary for approval.

WORK ON ILK SYSTEMS: Delegates considered IPBES/4/7, including a two-part annex containing approaches for working with ILK under the Platform and procedures for bringing ILK into the Platform's assessments. ILK Task Force Co-Chair Brigitte Baptiste provided an overview of the Task Force's work noting that the approaches, procedures, and the roster of ILK experts are three complementary components aiming to facilitate the inclusion of ILK holders and ILK experts in the work of the Platform and fill gaps in expertise. She also highlighted criteria for the nomination of ILK holders and ILK experts.

MEXICO, IIFBES, NORWAY and COLOMBIA raised concerns regarding the need to respect legal frameworks governing access to, and the use of, traditional knowledge and to take into account the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing. Delegates agreed to develop text reflecting these concerns to be inserted at a later stage.

The EU IPBES MEMBERS proposed changing a reference to "ILK holders and ILK experts" to "ILK experts, including ILK holders from IPLCs," which was rejected by the US, COLOMBIA, MEXICO, ETHIOPIA, NEW ZEALAND and IIFBES, noting that the language was previously agreed. NEW ZEALAND and IIFBES cautioned against introducing a hierarchy between ILK experts and ILK holders.

Delegates also clarified text on the nomination of experts to ensure that governments may use the roster of ILK experts, but are not restricted to it. They further decided to remove a reference on nominating members of the Task Force as assessment experts to avoid suggesting that the Task Force is a permanent body under IPBES.

On selection of experts for assessment teams, delegates agreed with a proposal by EU IPBES MEMBERS to delete text suggesting that "non-Panel members of the task force on ILK systems could be nominated and potentially selected following accepted procedures, to join the assessment author team as coordinating lead authors or lead authors."

On the preparation of draft reports, the EU IPBES MEMBERS questioned the identification of relevant published sources of ILK, noting there may also be unpublished sources.



He also expressed reservations on tasking the ILK Task Force with preparing a list of key ILK-relevant resources. Members of the ILK Task Force explained that an initial list was already prepared to support the first IPBES assessments. IIFBES stressed identification of local sources as relevant. COLOMBIA also echoed the utility of this work. The EU IPBES MEMBERS then proposed, and delegates agreed to, compromise text stating “the author team should be invited to use annotated lists of key ILK relevant resources, if such lists are developed in the framework of IPBES’ assessments.”

CONTACT GROUP II

GLOBAL ASSESSMENT: Delegates considered a revised draft decision on the methodological approach.

BRAZIL and ARGENTINA, opposed by JAPAN and the EU IPBES MEMBERS, suggested including national data sources. BRAZIL also cautioned against an overemphasis on open oceans, requesting including reference to terrestrial assessments. Participants agreed on the use of “reports prepared by the regular process of UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, including the World Ocean Assessment” and including the Global Environment Outlook series.

JAPAN expressed concern regarding the budgetary implications of experts liaising with secretariats of relevant global processes, agreeing that the MEP should facilitate this process. NORWAY, supported by the AFRICAN GROUP and the US, suggested, and participants agreed, that the assessment should not include policy-makers as authors, but rather include “policy-relevant experts.”

Delegates then considered the proposed chapter outline. Assessment Co-Chair Paul Leadley, Université Paris-Sud, reminded delegates that the introductory chapter aims to provide information from a broad perspective, which was supported by the US.

Regarding chapter two, MEP member Sandra Díaz, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, said that this chapter sets out “what exactly is going to be assessed.” The EU IPBES MEMBERS requested to clearly reference in this section the questions that the assessment aims to answer.

On chapter three, focusing on internationally agreed targets and goals in consultation with relevant institutions, CANADA cautioned against text that could result in judgement calls. On availability of existing and emerging indicators, BRAZIL called for consideration of parties’ reporting obligations. JAPAN queried if this meant that Members need to provide reports for the global assessment. Leadley suggested a clarification so that the assessment considers “indicators that are being developed in the context of the reporting obligations of the Parties to relevant biodiversity-related agreements.”

The AFRICAN GROUP reminded participants that the scoping document is intended for experts and thus simplification of language should not be stressed, except for the SPM.

On chapter four on plausible futures of nature, nature’s benefits to people and their contributions to a good quality of life, BRAZIL said “comparisons with internationally agreed goals” is unclear. The US suggested stating “outcomes of scenarios will be addressed in relation to agreed goals related to biodiversity and ecosystem services.”

CANADA emphasized that feedback loops in social and ecological systems do not “contribute to,” but rather “shift” future tipping points. NEW ZEALAND said evaluation of costs and benefits should include non-monetary analysis. The US suggested “policy” rather than “political” analysis of management actions and inactions.

Regarding analysis of plausible future scenarios, JAPAN said a reference to statistical extrapolations is too broad, suggesting “model-based projections including statistical extrapolation,” instead.

ASSESSMENT OF SCENARIOS AND MODELING:

In the afternoon, Co-Chair Ivar Baste (Norway) opened the negotiations on the SPM for scenarios and models.

Simon Ferrier, Assessment Co-Chair, responding to comments that had been made in plenary earlier in the week, outlined that they had dealt with three issues: concerns that the SPM may be too technical for policy-makers; prescriptive language; and a summary table of tools. He said that suggestions would be made for the SPM to be more usable for policy practitioners. On a suggestion on a summary table of tools, ranked from simple to complex and specifying potential applications, he said that the coverage is non-exhaustive, both in the SPM and in the full assessment, and that a more comprehensive collection would be contained in the evolving catalogue of policy support tools.

Delegates then considered the three high-level messages contained in the SPM, followed by a discussion of the first four key findings on the barriers that impede the widespread use of scenarios and models.

Participants discussed key findings under the first high-level message on barriers that impede the widespread use of scenarios and models, *inter alia*: scenarios and models as means of addressing the IPBES conceptual framework; role of different types of scenarios in relation to major phases of the policy cycle; models as means of translating alternative scenarios of drivers or policy interventions; and barriers impeding widespread and productive use of scenarios and models for policymaking and decision-making.

Co-Chair Baste closed the day’s discussions noting that they will resume deliberations on the SPM following Friday morning’s plenary session.

IN THE CORRIDORS

“Halfway” through the meeting, delegates, reconvening in their contact groups on Thursday morning, retained an “upbeat” atmosphere that was observed by many. “This is my first time attending this process,” one scientist representing an observer government said, “and I am quite impressed by the cordial, orderly and comprehensive manner in which the documents are approved.”

As the day progressed, it became increasingly obvious that she may have spoken too soon as contentions around the term “biocultural heritage” erupted once more. Unlike other definitions, which are drawn from other biodiversity-related Conventions, this particular term has no precedence. This is sparking both confusion, as delegates can’t rely on a single agreed interpretation of the term, as well as fear that whatever words are used to circumscribe it, “may take on a life of their own and pre-empt discussions in more policy-oriented fora,” explained one seasoned observer.

Cordiality won the day, nonetheless, as evidenced by an enthusiastic round of applause shortly after lunch when Contact Group I Co-Chair Bob Watson “cleared the SPM on pollinators for landing,” by recommending that Plenary approve the document on Friday without further amendment. A collective sigh of relief followed as delegates strolled out of the somber plenary hall. “This is the merit of scientists, experienced in diplomacy, combined with constructive support by stakeholders.”