

IPBES-5 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 7 MARCH 2017

The fifth Plenary Session of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES-5) opened in Bonn, Germany. In the morning, delegates heard keynote speeches and opening statements and addressed organizational matters.

In the afternoon, Plenary considered progress in implementing the IPBES work programme, and initiated discussions on budget and capacity building.

OPENING SESSION

IPBES Chair Robert Watson opened the session stressing the important role biodiversity and ecosystem services play for water, food security, and human well-being; and for achieving the SDGs, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement. IPBES Executive Secretary Anne Larigauderie updated delegates on IPBES' implementation, highlighting: the launch of the global assessment on biodiversity; progress in the regional and land degradation assessments; and the increasing uptake of the Pollinators Assessment by national governments and international agencies.

Eduardo Zamdri, UNEP, suggested strengthening IPBES' partnerships, including across the agriculture, energy and water sectors. Christiane Paulus, German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety, lauded steps taken to act on the findings of the Pollinators Assessment. She urged that discussions on IPBES' second work programme take budget limitations into account and be flexible to assist in implementing the CBD Strategic Plan. Reinhard Limbach, Deputy Mayor of the City of Bonn, said the IPBES needs to build bridges between the many facets of the global environmental agenda, underscoring that the adoption of the global assessment will be one way to do so.

In his keynote speech, UNFCCC Deputy Executive Secretary Richard Kinley urged both the climate change and biodiversity communities to focus on positive synergies to enhance "our" work. He suggested fully integrating the climate and biodiversity agendas with the implementation of the SDGs in national economic development and investment plans. He noted that the IPBES' global assessment "can be an important input" for the next round of nationally determined contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement.

Noting a recent "bend in the global emission curve" as global CO₂ emissions have not risen significantly during recent economic growth, Guy Midgley, Stellenbosch University, South Africa, stressed that projections based on current NDCs would lead to a 3°C average temperature rise by the end of the century. He showed the significant role of land carbon sinks in mitigating

warming, and emphasized ecosystem-based approaches to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Cautioning against negative impacts to biodiversity, he urged careful assessment before making decisions on the use of "negative" emission technologies such as bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS) or afforestation.

OPENING STATEMENTS: Azerbaijan, for the EASTERN EUROPEAN REGION (EER), underscored IPBES' relevance in supporting biodiversity conservation, policy-making and capacity building in the region.

Slovakia, for the EU IPBES MEMBERS, highlighted the impact that IPBES' work had on fostering initiatives and policy-making to reduce current risks for pollinators. He suggested that the review of the IPBES process balance goals with budget availability. Maldives, for the ASIA-PACIFIC REGION, described workshops undertaken in the region to execute the IPBES work programme, calling for furthering coordination efforts and strengthening IPBES communication channels.

Colombia, for the GROUP OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (GRULAC), urged launching the three outstanding assessments on sustainable use, invasive alien species and values of nature to honor the current IPBES work programme, noting this would increase IPBES' visibility and credibility.

Cameroon, for the AFRICAN GROUP, called for discussions on IPBES' review to see how to maintain IPBES' relevance and responsiveness. The US said no new work should be initiated unless other activities are struck from the work programme, cautioning against sacrificing quality for ambitious deadlines.

MEXICO presented an overview of the outcomes of CBD COP13, held in December 2016. He said 14 of the 40 decisions adopted mention IPBES, and underscored the urgency for IPBES to address issues raised by the CBD. The CBD acknowledged that the regional and Global assessments will be key inputs to the fifth edition of the global Biodiversity Outlook.

Kristina Raab, NeFo, on behalf of the Open-ended Stakeholder Network, provided an overview of IPBES-5 Stakeholder Day, and proposed to include the evaluation of the implementation of the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy as an explicit part of the review of the Platform.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: Delegates adopted the agenda and organization of work (IPBES/5/1/Rev.1 and IPBES/5/1/Rev.1/Add.1/Rev.1).

On the status of membership of the Platform, IPBES Chair Watson welcomed Estonia and Romania as new IPBES members.

Election of MEP Members: Bolivia, for GRULAC, nominated Marcelo Cabido (Argentina) as alternate MEP member, with three further replacements pending regional consultations. Brazil, for GRULAC, urged enhancing communication regarding the expert selection process and outcomes, requesting a report on

the 2016 selection processes. Chair Watson noted that countries' nominations of experts were unbalanced regarding gender and skills, leading the MEP and the Bureau to undertake a gap-filling process to gather the expertise needed. He recommended that countries carefully assess the issue and address it during the IPBES review.

Policy and procedures for the admission of observers: The EU IPBES MEMBERS introduced a proposal (IPBES/5/INF/27) that would grant the EU "enhanced observer" status with the right to: speak in turn; reply; introduce proposals; and provide views regarding implementation support, including financial support. Watson explained these rights would be exclusive and would not grant voting rights, noting a similar practice at the IPCC. The EER supported the proposal. The AFRICAN GROUP and GRULAC asked for more consultation time. MOROCCO cautioned against setting a precedent, noting outstanding agreement on parts of the IPBES' rules of procedure. SENEGAL agreed, suggesting that if the proposal is granted, the same status may be provided to any similar organizations making such a request in the future.

After informal consultations, Chair Watson reported that no agreement was reached, but that delegates were able to develop a better understanding of the issue.

Informal discussions will continue.

On admission of observers, delegates agreed that IPBES-5 continue using the interim procedures for the admission of observers.

PLENARY

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY: In her report (IPBES/5/2), IPBES Executive Secretary Larigauderie presented an update on IPBES activities in 2016, including: work of the task forces on capacity-building, knowledge and data and ILK, as well as the expert groups on policy support and the guide on assessment. She urged greater support for developed country experts as some are not sufficiently funded by their governments or institutions.

SWITZERLAND suggested direct reports from assessment co-chairs would allow for greater insight into difficulties faced. MOROCCO supported using cost-effective webinars and considering external peer reviews for the assessment on land degradation and restoration. MEXICO lamented underrepresentation of regions in task forces and limited progress on the three outstanding assessments on invasive alien species, sustainable use of biodiversity and values of nature.

Responding to inquirers, Watson confirmed that indirect factors, such as policies and incentives, are included in all IPBES work and that, once a summary for policy makers is approved, changes to assessment reports are allowed only "in response to comments made in plenary." He also explained that changes in terminology reflect a pluralistic approach combining both western and "mother earth" views, citing use of the expression "nature's contribution to the people," rather than "ecosystem services."

IUCN suggested adjustments to the peer review process to maximize confidence. FUTURE EARTH urged recognition of experts by various ways as is practice at the IPCC.

The UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea reported on its second cycle of the regular process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socioeconomic aspects.

BUDGET: IPBES Executive Secretary Larigauderie presented the IPBES budget and draft fundraising strategy (IPBES/5/10 and annex). She highlighted that a realistic estimate of current IPBES

activities, without launching new assessments and assuming a regular level of national contributions, will require an additional US\$3.4 million for 2017-2019 to complete ongoing activities.

Chair Watson said the Bureau considers launching new assessments infeasible due to funding limitations and constrained expert capacity because of ongoing assessments. Sebsebe Demissew, MEP, advised against starting new assessments in 2017.

Many developed countries welcomed the draft fundraising strategy and underscored their pledges to IPBES. NORWAY highlighted IPBES received three times more in-kind contributions than cash contributions, noting that "an investment in IPBES gives an impressive return." Some developed countries supported prioritizing ongoing assessments rather than launching new ones. SOUTH AFRICA expressed concerns over relegating the three outstanding assessments and called for carefully assessing both the work programme and the budget to identify opportunities for their launching. GRULAC, with the AFRICAN GROUP, acknowledged resource limitations but said that IPBES is "in debt with developing countries," as the thematic assessments, which they deemed a priority, have already been postponed. The AFRICAN GROUP cautioned that limiting work programme activities may limit IPBES' impact. COLOMBIA stated funding should not be earmarked. AUSTRALIA expressed concern regarding the budget assumptions.

IPBES Chair Watson tasked the budget group with considering the budget and fundraising strategy.

CAPACITY BUILDING: The Secretariat introduced a capacity-building framework, referred to as the "rolling plan," (IPBES-5/3) and reported on the second IPBES capacity-building forum, (IPBES/5/INF/3). Chair Watson suggested further discussing the issue on Thursday morning in the contact group.

IN THE CORRIDORS

IPBES delegates warmly welcomed the opening keynote speeches on synergies between biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation by renowned scientist Guy Midgley and UNFCCC Deputy Executive Secretary Richard Kinley. One participant said that learning about the "bend" in the global emissions curve "lifted up one's spirits on such a grey day." Another saw the speeches as proof of IPBES' potential role in translating the oft-talked about synergies between biodiversity and climate change into practice, "if its products are well received and applied by all stakeholders." IPBES veterans also lauded the "unprecedented" engagement of the UNFCCC Secretariat in discussions on operationalizing work on ILK during Monday's Stakeholder Day and the keynote speech on Tuesday, with one participant commenting: "this makes me hopeful."

When discussions turned to geographical representation, however, some regional representatives were less pleased. GRULAC members noted that some of their nominees had not been accepted as experts for assessment scoping tasks nor had they been informed of the outcomes of the selection procedure. "My concern is with the lack of geographical representation in experts and of transparency in the selection process," one delegate explained. Others added, however, that the problem with gender and academic disciplines is "unbalanced nominations originating from countries themselves," with women, the humanities and the social sciences often being underrepresented. Another participant disagreed saying that "all too often nominees that have been selected have to decline the position because of lack of support." This, she said, suggests that the imbalance is a result of a lack of support rather than of biased selection.