

IPBES-5 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 8 MARCH 2017

IPBES-5 delegates met in plenary in the morning and afternoon. Two contact groups met in the evening to continue discussions on agenda items opened in plenary. The budget group met at lunchtime and in the evening. A Friends of the Chair Group on the enhanced observer status of the European Union also met in the evening.

Plenary held initial discussions on: indigenous and local knowledge (ILK) systems; pending assessments; knowledge and data; policy support tools and methods; communication, stakeholder engagement and strategic partnerships; review of the platform; dates and venues of IPBES-6 and 7; and development of the second work programme.

Contact Group I continued deliberations on ILK systems. Contact Group II continued discussing pending assessments and the scoping report for the assessment on sustainable use of wild biodiversity.

PLENARY

INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE (ILK) SYSTEMS: The Secretariat introduced documents IPBES/5/4 and 5/INF/4 providing an update on ILK activities conducted in 2016. He outlined the proposed approach for integrating ILK, saying it includes four phases: defining problems and goals; bringing together evidence and data from multiple sources; appropriately engaging IPLCs in reviewing draft assessments; and “giving back” knowledge and insights to IPLCs.

Many members supported the approach. The EU IPBES MEMBERS said the approach should focus on ILK at a meta-level. COLOMBIA, PAKISTAN and URUGUAY cautioned against using web-based consultations. MEXICO urged taking PIC into account. IIFB proposed a workshop on values with IPLCs.

PENDING ASSESSMENTS: IPBES Executive Secretary Larigauderie invited delegates to consider the revised scoping report for an assessment on the sustainable use of wild species and whether and when to initiate work on this and the other outstanding assessments. She reiterated the Bureau’s recommendation not to launch new assessments in 2017, due to financial and capacity constraints. IPBES Chair Watson said each assessment would cost approximately US\$ 1 million based on a minimum number of authors, meetings and experts required to ensure report quality.

GERMANY, NORWAY and the US preferred not initiating assessments in 2017, with the US calling for incorporating the findings of current assessments into the pending assessments’ scoping documents. GERMANY said the assessments should be undertaken subject to available budget and capacities. Bosnia and Herzegovina, for EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, suggested the decision be also subject to the capacity of, *inter alia*, the MEP, governments and IPBES to disseminate their results.

FRANCE emphasized the need to ensure the quality of assessments and suggested postponing new assessments to the second work programme, which MEXICO, COLOMBIA, GUATEMALA, PERU and the AFRICAN GROUP opposed. MEXICO and the AFRICAN GROUP said the assessments should not be referred to as “new,” since they are “pending tasks” from the first work programme. SOUTH AFRICA suggested exploring innovative ways to carry out the pending assessments more efficiently, including partnerships with organizations and governments.

DENMARK, JAPAN and SWEDEN suggested prioritizing the assessment on the value of nature, while MEXICO, BRAZIL, MALAYSIA and other developing countries highlighted the relevance of all three, in particular of the assessment on sustainable use.

MEXICO, with COLOMBIA, and the AFRICAN GROUP and CITES, supported adopting the scoping document for the assessment on sustainable use at IPBES-5 to enable its launch as soon as resources are available.

KNOWLEDGE AND DATA: The Secretariat introduced the proposed work plan and informed of work done so far (IPBES/5/5 and IPBES/5/INF/5).

On indicators, many called for: broad accessibility; avoiding duplications; and aligning them with work under the CBD and the 2030 Development Agenda. On web-based infrastructures, the AFRICAN GROUP called for developing a repository. SWITZERLAND suggested a common approach be used among experts to facilitate internal work.

On catalyzing knowledge generation, many parties said identification of knowledge gaps is a continuous process. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA suggested a workshop on this issue in his country, and offered financial support. The US cautioned that identifying research gaps may not be appropriate within the data and knowledge task force but be better addressed within work on assessments. INDIA supported feedback from the scientific community, and suggested industry feedback could also be useful.

Paul Leadley, MEP, confirmed that indicators are linked to other processes and suggested that a guide for the appropriate use of indicators be provided. He also explained that making data publicly available would require permission from data providers.

POLICY SUPPORT TOOLS AND METHODOLOGIES: The Secretariat introduced documents IPBES/5/8 and INF/14. He said that during the intersessional period work continued on the online catalogue of policy support tools and methodologies and a prototype has been shared with members. He stated Plenary is asked to consider, *inter alia*, the suggested approach for further content development and to extend the mandate of the expert group on policy support tools and methodologies until IPBES-7.

COMMUNICATION, STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS: The Secretariat introduced this item (IPBES/5/9, INF/15, INF/16 and INF/17). Executive Secretary Larigauderie reported progress in forming

strategic partnerships, noting MOUs signed with CMS, CITES, the Ramsar Convention, IUCN and Future Earth, and adding that MOUs with other organizations are being prepared.

FRANCE proposed an MoU with the IPCC. Larigauderie said the Plenary needs to provide a mandate to the Secretariat to enter into MOUs with the UNCCD and UNFCCC, but no such mandate is needed for the IPCC. CMS said the MOU is an incentive and opportunity to strengthen collaboration.

The Secretariat then presented forthcoming activities under the communication and stakeholder engagement strategy, including developing a brand strategy and media outreach plan, and a three-phase communication plan for launching the regional and land degradation assessments, including publishing “opinion pieces and editorials.” Responding to concerns raised, he explained “opinion pieces” do not advocate specific positions or policies.

GERMANY, with BELGIUM and SWEDEN, asked to permit wider use of the IPBES logo and acronym, which was opposed by the US. The Secretariat clarified that the Plenary decided that the Secretariat must authorize all logo and acronym usage. Noting diverse views on logo use, Chair Watson said the Bureau would discuss this and revert to Plenary.

REVIEW OF THE PLATFORM: The Secretariat introduced document IPBES 5/11, including: a proposal for an internal and an external review element, with the latter consisting of a 10-member review panel, which could be managed by an administrative officer within the Secretariat or by an external agency; and a draft questionnaire.

The EU IPBES MEMBERS expressed concern on timing of the review, noting it provides crucial inputs for designing the second work programme. BRAZIL, with MEXICO, said a review may be premature given pending deliverables of the first work programme. The AFRICAN GROUP expressed concerns over the review costs. MEXICO suggested first defining “what we want to measure” and to then look at “who” should measure and “when.” He supported assessing the administrative efficacy and scientific quality of products and their impact on decision-makers.

The EU IPBES MEMBERS said the review process should ensure independence, and asked to clarify the potential relationship of an external professional organization with the external review panel. COLOMBIA, BRAZIL and MEXICO supported an internal review element.

While some countries preferred involving an external agency in managing the external review element, they expressed flexibility given budgetary constraints. NORWAY supported hiring an administrative officer. SENEGAL expressed concern that this could affect the review’s independence. The US preferred an external review process. COLOMBIA suggested further consideration of the role of national focal points, governments and NGOs in the review process. SOUTH AFRICA suggested including ILK representatives. FUTURE EARTH proposed strengthening the incorporation of the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy.

Many countries asked for further work on the questionnaire and highlighted insufficient time to do so during IPBES-5. Noting the likely involvement of evaluation experts in the review, AUSTRALIA opposed providing very detailed questions. SWITZERLAND said the questionnaire do not sufficiently address the assessment of IPBES effectiveness.

Chair Watson suggested that the contact group discuss, among other issues, whether the review should focus only on the platform’s process or also on its overall effectiveness. The latter, he noted would require waiting until the uptake of IPBES outcomes by policy makers can be assessed.

DATES AND VENUES OF IPBES-6 AND 7: Executive Secretary Larigauderie presented the provisional agendas and organizations of work for IPBES-6 and IPBES-7 (IPBES/5/12). The US proposed member countries submit their comments two weeks prior to IPBES-6 and the Secretariat to summarize key points of discussion based on those comments. Chair Watson

invited members to reflect on this “radical” suggestion “which would limit IPBES-6 discussions to only those prior submitted comments,” by Friday.

Members accepted Colombia’s offer to host of IPBES-6.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SECOND WORK

PROGRAMME: Executive Secretary Larigauderie presented on the possible initiation of the development of a second work programme for IPBES (IPBES/5/12).

EU IPBES MEMBERS emphasized that any work programme should be responsive to the relevant international conventions and UN processes and, supported by the US, proposed a rolling work programme. BRAZIL and IUCN suggested delaying a second work programme by “at least one year.” SOUTH AFRICA highlighted the need to: first identify priority issues; be fiscally responsible; and emphasize quality over quantity.

CONTACT GROUP I

This contact group, co-chaired by Diego Pacheco Balanza, (Bolivia) and IPBES Chair Robert Watson (UK), considered the proposed approach to ILK. After providing general comments, delegates proceeded with discussions paragraph-by-paragraph, with many underscoring the need for addressing these issues in a careful and respectful manner and being cognizant of PIC. Discussions continued into the night.

CONTACT GROUP II

This contact group chaired by Ivar Baste (Norway) discussed how to proceed on the three pending assessments, with each assessment being prioritized by one or several countries. Delegates considered several options including: launching one assessment at IPBES-5 subject to available funds; launching one assessment in late 2017; and postponing all three assessments. Delegates also considered whether to link pending assessments with the ongoing assessments, but noted this was unlikely to provide an immediate cost reduction.

Delegates eventually started to address the sustainable use scoping document, despite persisting disagreement over the assessment’s launch. Discussions continued into the night.

IN THE CORRIDORS

With the prospect of night sessions looming over delegates just like the heavy rain clouds hanging over Bonn, and delegates rushed through the agenda in plenary to separate the sensitive issues needing careful consideration from those that were easier to resolve, which one delegate likened to “hoary old chestnuts.”

ILK systems clearly belonged to the group of sensitive issues and even though some delegates wondered whether the lengthy introductions were necessary given the advanced hour, many appreciated the “useful advice” and “effective directions” from the podium, including Chair Watson’s insights from his experience with the IPCC.

Discussions on the review of the platform also morphed into a sensitive issue as delegates expressed divergent views on its objective. Some understood the mandate to review the “effectiveness of the administrative and scientific functions of IPBES” as focusing on the Platform’s processes, such as its performance in nominating and recruiting experts, engaging stakeholders or integrating ILK; others preferred a broader interpretation noting that the review should include an evaluation of the impact of the Platform’s assessments. Doing so, however, would imply postponing the review until such impacts can be measured. One delegate therefore worried: “I hope we don’t postpone both the review and the pending assessments. That would be unfortunate.” Another participant was more optimistic noting “we may be able to compromise on conducting a limited review now and launching one of the pending assessments.” Reflecting on the budget discussions, she added, “it is clear to me though that IPBES-5 can’t have it all.”