

IPBES-6 HIGHLIGHTS: SUNDAY, 18 MARCH 2018

The sixth session of the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES-6) opened on Sunday with opening statements and reports on progress. Members then initiated discussions on the summaries for policy makers (SPMs) of four regional assessments of biodiversity and ecosystem services, and the assessment on land degradation and restoration. Plenary also opened all other items on the agenda and referred substantive issues to contact groups that will meet during the week.

Highlights of the day included the following:

- Regional groups praised the work IPBES has done to date, with several stressing the need to launch three pending assessments to complete the Platform's first work programme.
- Several members pledged to make additional contributions to the 2018 budget and beyond, while calling for a sustainable funding strategy.
- In the evening, four contact groups began discussing the SPMs of the four regional assessments.

PLENARY

IPBES Chair Robert Watson opened IPBES-6, welcoming the comments that had been submitted by governments on the draft assessment reports and suggesting that SPM negotiations focus on these comments.

OPENING STATEMENTS: Many regions acknowledged IPBES' achievements despite financial, data, and human resource constraints. The AFRICAN GROUP welcomed the land degradation assessment, noting that issues of trade and climate change need to be further refined. ASIA AND PACIFIC stressed the importance of assessments for measuring progress and called for enhancing the momentum to build a strong second work programme.

The EASTERN EUROPEAN REGION emphasized the multi-disciplinary nature of knowledge produced in the assessments, and the need for methodological guidance for the assessments on sustainable use and invasive alien species. Bulgaria, speaking on behalf of the EU Members that are IPBES Members (EU IPBES Members) and the EU in its role as enhanced observer, highlighted that the technical assessment chapters provide an exhaustive analysis of the status quo and trends of biodiversity.

GRULAC, stressed, *inter alia*: that the assessments provide a sound set of evidence for better decision making; the importance of starting work on pending assessments; and the need to identify

the next region to chair IPBES. The US suggested developing a flexible rolling work programme to adjust to members' needs and asked to prioritize completion of the global assessment and review of the Platform to inform the shape of IPBES' future.

The OPEN-ENDED NETWORK OF IPBES STAKEHOLDERS highlighted the need to consider underrepresented ecosystems and groups of peoples, and called for initiating the pending assessments, emphasizing the assessment of diverse conceptualization of multiple values of nature and its benefits.

The INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS FORUM ON BIODIVERSITY (IIFB) welcomed the participatory mechanism for the inclusion of indigenous and traditional knowledge (ILK), and called for a process to ensure "our effective inputs are incorporated" in assessments.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: Members adopted the agenda and organization of work (IPBES/6/1) adding an item on the election of the Bureau including discussions on the sequence of the next three regions to nominate the Platform's Chair, as proposed by GRULAC. Chair Watson updated members on the election of new members of the Multi-Disciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) (IPBES/6/13) and reported that 48 organizations had been admitted as observers (IPBES/6/14 and IPBES/6/INF/23/Rev.1).

REPORTS: In her report on progress in implementing the work programme (IPBES/6/2 and IPBES/6/INF/12-22), Executive Secretary Anne Larigauderie highlighted: progress in strengthening national and regional capacities; implementation of the ILK approach in the context of the global assessment and development of relevant methodological guidance; indicators for IPBES assessments; and improvements in stakeholder engagement and outreach.

Global assessment Co-Chair Sandra Díaz (Argentina) reported on progress (IPBES/6/INF/11), noting the global assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services will build on the regional assessments, the land degradation and restoration assessment, and the pollinators assessment.

The item will be further discussed in the contact group on the review of IPBES and the second Work Programme.

BUDGET: In her report on financial and budgetary arrangements for the Platform (IPBES/6/9), Executive Secretary Larigauderie highlighted three proposed budget scenarios for the 2018 budget: a zero-growth option, a below zero-growth option and an optimal option. FRANCE, SWEDEN, GERMANY, the EU and the UK highlighted their current and upcoming contributions. GERMANY and JAPAN encouraged all members to make contributions, even small amounts. NORWAY stressed the need for

sustainable funding, noting the need to also discuss the frequency of Plenary meetings. SWITZERLAND proposed the introduction of an indicative scale of contributions.

Members established a contact group co-chaired by Spencer Thomas (Grenada) and Rashad Allahverdiyev (Iran).

REGIONAL ASSESSMENTS: The Secretariat outlined the production process for the regional assessments (IPBES/6/INF/7). The Co-Chairs of the regional assessments provided brief overviews over the content of each assessment and key messages highlighted in the draft SPMs. Delegates agreed to establish four contact groups to discuss the regional assessments in depth, which will meet until Tuesday evening.

IPBES Chair Watson reminded delegates that deliberations on the key messages on conclusions of assessments remain confidential until the SPMs are released to the public following their adoption in plenary. The Secretariat added that the contact groups should aim to reach consensus on the SPMs and assessment chapters and forward them to plenary for final approval and acceptance, respectively.

ASSESSMENT ON LAND DEGRADATION AND LAND RESTORATION: Executive Secretary Anne Larigauderie introduced the process followed to produce the chapters of the assessment report (IPBES/6/INF/1) and the draft SPM (IPBES/6/3). Co-Chair Luca Montanarella (Italy) presented the assessment's highlights, emphasizing that the efforts made to include different world views resulted in "a first ever comprehensive assessment on this important cross-cutting topic."

Members agreed to conduct in-depth discussions of the assessment's SPM in a contact group, co-chaired by Fundisile Goodman Mketeni (South Africa) and Ivar Baste (Norway).

PENDING ASSESSMENTS: Larigauderie introduced the pending assessments, including thematic assessments of the sustainable use of wild species and invasive alien species, and a methodological assessment regarding the diverse conceptualization of multiple values of nature and its benefits (IPBES/6/8). She also presented the respective scoping documents that lay out the scope, rationale and utility of each assessment, identify key information sources, and provide a draft outline (IPBES/6/INF 8-10). She noted that the MEP and the Bureau recommend: not to change the scoping documents; to increase the number of lead authors and meetings, raising the total cost per assessment by approximately 40%; and to stagger the initiation of the three pending assessments.

Members agreed to discuss the pending assessments further in the budget contact group.

REVIEW OF THE PLATFORM AND DEVELOPMENT OF A SECOND WORK PROGRAMME: The Secretariat introduced IPBES/6/10 and INF/32, outlining the methodology used for the internal review of the Platform and IPBES/6/11 on a process for developing the Platform's second work programme.

Members agreed to further discuss these items in a contact group, co-chaired by Alfred Oteng-Yeboah (Ghana) and Robert Watson (UK).

DATE AND VENUE OF FUTURE PLENARY SESSIONS: The Secretariat introduced the draft preliminary agenda and organization of work for IPBES-7 (IPBES/6/12), and invited offers to host IPBES-7 and IPBES-8.

INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS: The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), also on behalf of UN Environment (UNEP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) introduced a progress report on the UN collaborative partnership arrangement (IPBES/5/INF/24), and reiterated their commitment to support IPBES and countries in their implementation of actions to address the findings of IPBES' assessments.

CONTACT GROUPS

Europe and Central Asia Regional Assessment: This contact group was co-chaired by Ivar Andreas Baste (Norway) and Senka Barudanovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina). Assessment Co-Chairs Mark Rounsevell (UK) and Markus Fischer (Switzerland) presented the structure and content of the SPM, highlighting key messages. They drew attention to key knowledge gaps encountered in the development of the assessment and summarized the comments received. Participants urged for smart use of the terms "nature's contributions to people," without neglecting the evolution and acceptance of "ecosystem services." They also asked to ensure alignment of the messages with the other regional assessments to encourage adoption.

Americas Regional Assessment: Co-chaired by Brigitte Baptiste (Colombia) and Robert Watson (UK), the contact group started its deliberations with Baptiste underscoring the need to consider the document "word by word, including all figures, graphs, tables and annexes." She also stressed that "we have 16.5 hours to complete our work." Jake Rice (Canada), Co-Chair of the regional assessment, delivered a presentation of the work, which was followed by general, initial remarks and a question and answer session.

Africa Regional Assessment: This contact group, co-chaired by Alfred Oteng Yeboah (Ghana) and Fundisile Goodman Mketeni (South Africa) began considering the Africa regional assessment and its SPM. Yeboah introduced the assessment's Co-Chairs Jo Mulongoy (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Luthando Dziba (South Africa), and Emma Archer (South Africa), who gave brief overviews of various sections of the SPM. Contact group participants made general comments, including pertaining to sub-regional representation in the assessment.

Asia-Pacific Regional Assessment: This contact group, co-chaired by Youngbae Suh (Republic of Korea) and Asghar Fazl (Iran) heard presentations by the assessments' Co-Chairs. IPBES members commented on the SPM, *inter alia* stressing the important role of coral reefs. The Co-Chairs then explained how this was addressed in the chapters of the assessment.

Discussions in all contact groups continued into the evening.

IN THE CORRIDORS

On Sunday, delegates transitioned smoothly from early morning preparation meetings, eager to get a head start on what many characterized an "extremely ambitious agenda." Following IPBES custom, Chair Watson ran through the entire agenda at a dizzying pace, opening all items and pushing discussions into contact groups for further debate. All this to ensure adequate time for the meat of the matter – the highly anticipated discussions on the key messages of the five assessments.

Delegates in the morning applauded the Platform's progress, noting that "in spite of the constrained financial circumstances," IPBES is meeting its goals. The need to scale-up financial support also became apparent in the discussion on the budget when members were presented with "zero growth" and "ideal" budget options, marked by a substantial difference between the two. The suggestion to develop an indicative scale of contributions led some participants to ponder during lunch whether shifting to such a "mandatory-voluntary" approach would be the appropriate way "to boost the kitty." Some asked for a better recognition of the non-monetary side of the budget, noting that "in-kind contributions weigh just as much as monetary contributions, if not more." In a muted response, others held on to the notion that "those who can, should contribute."