

IPBES-6 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 20 MARCH 2018

IPBES-6 delegates met briefly in plenary in the morning to take stock of progress and finalize several operational decisions. They then resumed negotiating the summaries for policy makers (SPMs) of the regional assessments in four contact groups.

The day's highlights included the following:

- France offered to host the next session of the Plenary in Paris in May 2019.
- The contact group for the Africa regional assessment discussed means of implementation as well as governance issues to ensure effective follow-up to the assessment's findings in the region.
- The contact group for the Americas regional assessment discussed whether to use the concept of nature's contributions to people exclusively or in tandem with the concept of ecosystem services and what the implications of using both concepts would be.
- The contact group for the Asia and the Pacific regional assessment discussed how to best display and explain the scenarios used to outline different possible pathways to sustainability.
- The contact group for the Europe and Central Asia regional assessment discussed how to balance achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets in the scenario archetypes.
- An informal group met over lunchtime to discuss cross-cutting issues and harmonize the use of terms, such as biocapacity, ecological footprint, nature's contributions to people, and ecosystem services.

PLENARY

The Co-Chairs of the contact groups on the regional assessments provided updates on progress and outlined next steps towards finalizing the negotiations in the contact groups. Youngbae Suh, Contact Group Co-Chair on the Asia-Pacific regional assessment, reported disagreement over the use of the terminology of 'Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs)' and suggested this issue be discussed as a cross-cutting issue. IPBES Chair Robert Watson stressed that there is little choice in the use of the term IPLCs, if IPBES is to be fully consistent with resolutions by the UN General Assembly and IPBES' own rules of procedure and work.

Budget contact group Co-Chair Spencer Thomas reported that the Secretariat had provided clarity on the three budget scenarios to the group.

Delegates agreed to establish an informal group to discuss cross-cutting issues to be led by Chair Watson. They then elected Ana Maria Hernandez (Colombia) as new Bureau member for GRULAC.

JAPAN asked for reflection of a disclaimer in the IPBES-6 report and in the assessment text, regarding the display of disputed territories in the maps used in the assessments.

DATES AND VENUES OF IPBES-7 AND IPBES-8:

FRANCE expressed interest in hosting IPBES-7 in Paris from 20 – 25 May 2019. Plenary accepted this offer and the proposed dates. A formal decision will be adopted on Saturday.

CONTACT GROUPS

AFRICA REGIONAL ASSESSMENT: The group met throughout the day to consider the background and key messages related to strengthening African transformation frameworks, governance scenarios and the role of biodiversity in achieving regional and global targets.

Participants delved into discussions on the means of implementation necessary for Africa to achieve conservation and development goals. They discussed ways to operationalize 'polycentric governance,' which refers to a balance between multi-stakeholder and multi-level adaptive governance, along with integration of indigenous and local knowledge (ILK).

The group further discussed the importance of compelling and clear messaging. It also considered the role of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services in achieving the Paris Agreement and the SDGs, and links to disaster risk reduction.

The group then discussed new text pertaining to the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity against threats due to climate change, ocean acidification and pollution.

In their discussions, delegates deliberated on a range of possible governance options to deliver biodiversity-related benefits to the continent, discussing the importance of promoting access and benefit sharing relating to genetic resources, and acknowledging the value of ILK.

Informal consultations were held on issues that required deeper consideration. Discussions continued into the night.

AMERICAS REGIONAL ASSESSMENT: In the morning, participants focused on direct and indirect drivers of trends in biodiversity, as well as on governance issues. They addressed, among others: references to international trade and finance; economic growth being experienced differently across regions and within subregions; balancing terrestrial and marine drivers of biodiversity loss; and whether to add reference to potential benefits of unsustainable agricultural intensification.

Regarding climate change and extreme weather events, they considered whether the same degree of confidence can be attributed to precipitation trends as regarding extreme temperatures.

The group further shed light on: issues around hydroelectric development and biofuels; the interactions among different drivers; governance arrangements, including their coordination and disentangling the roles of governance institutions and processes; and examples of tools available for political decision making and governance schemes, like payments for ecosystem services or voluntary certification systems.

In the afternoon, participants focused on future trends in biodiversity and nature's contributions to people. Addressing three different pathways to move away from a business as usual future, they discussed: creating a pull-out box explaining the scenarios; clearly identifying sources of data; the level of certainty of the utilized model for drawing safe future projections; ways to better portray biodiversity gains, following different scenarios; and whether additional future pathways could be included in the analysis. Furthermore, they deliberated on: expanding the analysis to other types of ecosystems; referring to "goals, targets, and aspirations" rather than international "commitments;" effects on biodiversity of unregulated markets and land conversion; and whether to include references to other international agreements and targets, like the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the SDGs, and the Paris Agreement.

In the evening, participants continued tackling issues of governance, management and policy options, as well as pending issues.

ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL ASSESSMENT: In the morning, delegates, *inter alia*: approved revised paragraphs and tables; clarified consistency issues with other multilateral processes; and debated references to potential risks and benefits of genetically modified crops, and the environmental impacts of economic growth.

In the afternoon, delegates approved compromise text of the SPM's background section, emanating from the work of small informal groups, including on the importance of coral reefs. Delegates continued to discuss how to use the evolving concept of nature's contributions to people and its relation to the ecosystem services concept, and whether they should refer to both concepts in tandem or only refer to ecosystem services as the more established concept. They also considered that using both concepts in combination could suggest an artificial separation between them. One delegate suggested that, where economic values are concerned, a reference to ecosystem services is appropriate, and, where non-material values are addressed, reference to nature's contribution to people is preferable.

Delegates then embarked on the first reading of the key messages, and discussed, *inter alia*: a proposal to highlight differences in the use of, and data gaps in, diverse value systems; and illegal trade in wildlife causing species decline.

The group continued its deliberations into the night.

EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA REGIONAL ASSESSMENT: Assessment Co-Chair Markus Fischer informed participants that the structure of the SPM has been aligned to other assessments.

He also presented a proposal to resolve the debate on nature's contributions to people and ecosystem services by introducing these concepts upfront and describing their interlinkages. Participants asked for a balance between information on how the SDGs and Aichi Biodiversity Targets can be achieved under the scenario archetypes.

In the afternoon, the group completed discussions on the background section. Delegates deliberated at length on governance options and opportunities for mainstreaming the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Issues of recognizing indigenous rights resulted in debates regarding the use of IPLC terminology. The group then began work on the key messages, urging for punchy, short statements that would attract the attention of decision makers.

These discussions continued late into the evening.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Despite reports of "good progress" on the key messages of the regional assessments during the stock-taking plenary in the morning, delegates clearly felt the pressure to "pick up the pace" when IPBES Chair Watson encouraged them to make full use of the available interpretation time until 10:30 pm on Tuesday night. Stumbling blocks persisted in all contact groups and delegates from all regions were skeptical about whether they would be able to meet the deadline. The establishment of an informal group to discuss cross-cutting issues and harmonize messaging was therefore welcomed as a useful step. The mandate of that group included clarifying the use of terms and concepts, such as biocapacity, ecological footprint, nature's contributions to people, and ecosystem services.

In a brief commentary after establishing the group, Chair Watson emphasized that some terms, such as IPLCs, should be applied without question, since they have been agreed upon and well elaborated in the UN General Assembly and the Convention on Biological Diversity. One delegate was heard wondering: "I thought after more than a decade of negotiations we had finally put this issue to rest." Another delegate whispered, "I am glad our group decided to let sleeping dogs lie."

As delegates continued assessment discussions, complex terminology, such as "ecotopia solutions pathways" continued to puzzle many. Shaking his head, one seasoned participant asked: "How can I convince my policy makers when I can't even understand this myself?" Another lamented that, "we are losing the plot" on policy-relevance.

Yet another delegate sympathized with scientists' difficulty in simplifying information, particularly the challenge to develop infographics that are both accurate and accessible, noting that "if it takes the contact group 20 minutes to interpret the figure, then a policy maker doesn't stand a chance." As the contact groups continued, reformulation of SPMs progressed towards what one referred to as, "clear, compelling, accessible and impactful messages."

With the clock ticking, delegates' hope for an early night were dashed. This stirred anxiety over whether plenary on Thursday afternoon will approve the fruits of their work. Thinking one step further, one IPBES member remarked that "the ultimate test of work will be its use by policy makers."