

IPBES-6 HIGHLIGHTS: FRIDAY, 23 MARCH 2018

On Friday, IPBES-6 delegates finalized their discussions on pending assessments, implementation of IPBES' first work programme and development of the next work programme. The contact group on land degradation and restoration continued to negotiate the summary for policy makers (SPM) of the assessment throughout the day and into the night.

Highlights of the day included the following:

- The SPMs and assessment chapters of the four regional and subregional assessments of biodiversity and ecosystem services were publicly launched at a media event in the morning.
- Delegates supported holding an informal meeting in 2018 to consider the draft SPM of the global assessment prior to its submission for approval at IPBES-7.
- Delegates agreed that the pending assessments on sustainable use of wild species and on diverse conceptualizations of multiple values of nature should be considered for approval "no later than" at IPBES-10.
- On the pending assessment on sustainable use of wild species, delegates agreed to hold a workshop with IPBES' UN Partners and appropriate multilateral agreements to provide input to the assessment.

CONTACT GROUPS

LAND DEGRADATION AND RESTORATION: Co-Chair Ivar Baste (Norway), reminded the group that they were working overtime, and appealed for goodwill from participants to complete consideration of pending key messages and background paragraphs.

Delegates' views differed on referencing protectionist trade policies and market distortions. They addressed text on the value of integrating development agendas to avoid, reduce and reverse land degradation and agreed to also include non-market values. They also discussed a growing lack of consumer awareness about the implications of their consumption choices due to increasing separation and spatial disconnection between consumers and the ecosystems that produce their food and other commodities. Many commented on a figure illustrating the global trade flows of ten countries against the biodiversity footprint of those flows

in terms of number of threatened species. Delegates sought further clarification on, *inter alia*: the use of the term 'biodiversity footprinting'; the possibility of increasing the number of countries displayed; and the sources and dates of the data used.

On institutional, policy, and governance responses to address land degradation, delegates discussed the need for better coordination among ministries and public and private stakeholders associated with different sectors.

On per capita consumption as a factor underpinning increasing degradation, they did not agree on including voluntary family planning as a measure to regulate population growth. They also discussed reference to per capita consumption being high in developed countries and rising in developing ones.

In the afternoon, they discussed text on restoration of degraded land. They also considered how climate change affects land degradation and vice versa, noting that climate change exacerbates both the extent and severity of land degradation.

The group also discussed several sustainable practices to restore degraded lands, with some proposing to include a table representing "goalposts" for a land-degradation neutral world, and possible actions and pathways to achieve them. Some proposed including in the table specific issues, such as soil-tolerant species, and integrated crop and livestock and forestry systems.

Participants deliberated upon: 'passive and active' restoration measures; adding rehabilitation measures to restoration actions; and distinguishing between invasive alien species and invasive species that are not alien. They further discussed: ways to make language less prescriptive; including a table presenting research gaps; whether to reference specific initiatives under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change; and whether to reflect the anthropogenic dimensions that may negatively impact fire management.

REVIEW OF THE PLATFORM AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORK PROGRAMME: The contact group, co-chaired by Alfred Oteng-Yeboah (Ghana) and Robert Watson (UK), met to discuss a draft decision on the implementation of the IPBES Work Programme of the Platform (IPBES/6/1/Add.2). On the implementation of the first work programme, the group agreed to a suggestion to request the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) and the Bureau to consider

how to improve the integration, transparency, accountability and coherence of the programme across all its functions, expert groups, and task forces, taking account of the findings of the internal review.

In a section regarding knowledge foundations, participants discussed how to include Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) in knowledge gathering, agreeing to request the Secretariat and the MEP, supported by the task force on indigenous and local knowledge, to carry out a consultation process in partnership with IPLCs on the application of the participatory mechanism.

On global, regional and sub-regional assessments, participants suggested that nature's contributions to people is an evolving concept. They also noted that lessons learned from previous assessments should guide the development of the global assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services. They further considered how to ensure that the results of the completed assessments, as well as any other relevant assessments by other international bodies, are considered in the preparation of the global assessment; while ensuring that the policy questions identified in the scoping report are addressed within the SPM.

Participants further discussed conducting an additional review of the SPM of the global assessment between the second review and the submission of the working documents to IPBES-7, with many noting it would significantly delay the process. They also considered hiring professional scientific communicators to support the drafting of the working document, with many voicing concerns pertaining to the associated budgetary implications.

On the catalogue of policy tools and methodologies, many called for increased efforts to enhance uptake, also requesting the Secretariat and others to refine the catalogue's structure and functionality, subject to the availability of resources.

The group further addressed the development of a second work programme (IPBES/6/11), focusing on the annex containing initial draft elements. Some noted that the discussion on specific assessments is premature, stressing the need not to presuppose future assessments, while others emphasized the importance of drawing "the big picture" of IPBES activities.

Summarizing the work of the contact group, Co-Chair Watson noted strong support for a meeting of informal consultations in 2018 to review the SPM of the global assessment and to exchange ideas on the elements of the framework of the new work programme. He also: underlined the need to take a holistic look at the structure of expert groups and task forces; highlighted cost estimates related to the work programme and the importance of sustainable financing; and underscored the need for adequate nominations to fulfil IPBES objectives.

PENDING ASSESSMENTS: This group, co-chaired by Spencer Thomas (Grenada) and Rashad Allahverdiyev (Iran), discussed the draft decision related to the pending assessments (IPBES/6/1/Add.2).

On the thematic assessments, participants discussed: whether to consider the assessment on the sustainable use of wild species at IPBES-9 or "no later than" IPBES-10; and a proposal to convene

a workshop on sustainable use, consulting with appropriate multilateral environmental agreements and IPBES UN partners, to provide inputs to the assessment process.

The group also agreed to approve the undertaking of a methodological assessment regarding the diverse conceptualization of multiple values of nature and its benefits (values assessment), following IPBES-6, for consideration by IPBES-10.

A revised draft decision will be prepared.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Around the venue on Friday afternoon, it was not difficult to tell which contact groups had finished their work. While some delegates were still formally dressed, reflective and fatigued, many others casually strolled the hallways in jeans and sandals, kept inside only by the rainy weather outside. Many were still elated by the successful approval of all four regional assessments on Thursday. One delegate, sharing his experiences of a night of celebration remarked, "that was not only a good way to end the week of negotiations, but also the perfect way to mark the end of three years of blood, sweat and tears... and thank God it's Friday!"

The jubilation was sustained throughout the day after the first media reports reached the public domain with news of the regional assessments' launch, which, according to one delegate, "are proof of IPBES' growing relevance around the world."

Infused with the euphoria from the night before, the contact groups discussing pending assessments and IPBES' future work programme swiftly completed its work, easily overcoming some of the stumbling blocks that had haunted previous discussions. One delegate commented, "hopefully the quick and painless work bodes well for our future work."

Meanwhile, however, progress was much slower in the contact group on land degradation and restoration, which met, on what some deemed as "borrowed time," as the negotiations continued far beyond Thursday night's deadline. In a half empty room, discontented participants objected to the repeated attempts by some to add text and make substantive changes, with one opining, "I think some of us have this science-policy platform confused for a political negotiating process." One delegate cautioned that some of the messages proposed risk going far beyond the allowed territory of being policy relevant, into the realm of being policy prescriptive. Another pointed out that knowledge from the social sciences is not necessarily prescriptive but can inform policy planning, design, and implementation.

As pressure mounted for the group to complete its work, many welcomed the stormy weather outside, which "helps us forget that it is Friday and allows us to concentrate on the pressing task at hand." As thunder roared, punctuating statements, Co-Chair Mketeni went as far as saying "this is God's voice of approval," with some delegates wondering whether, after all, it was Mother Earth sending a sign of urgency.

ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS: The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of IPBES-6 will be available on Tuesday, 27 March 2018 at <http://enb.iisd.org/ipbes/6-plenary/>