

IPBES-7 Stakeholder Day Highlights: Sunday, 28 April 2019

The Stakeholder Day, preceding the seventh session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES-7), was held on Sunday, 28 April 2019 in Paris, France. The Stakeholder Day provided an opportunity for interested organizations to hear updates on the IPBES process and to discuss their engagement in the Plenary session.

IPBES-7 is expected to finalize and launch the Global Assessment on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, the last deliverable of the Platform's first work programme. The Plenary will also discuss the second work programme and address the outcomes of the Platform's external review.

Stakeholder Day discussions focused on:

- Sharing information about IPBES and its assessment processes;
- Processes, mechanisms, initiatives, and networks available for stakeholder engagement;
- Stakeholder capacities, interests, and needs for support;
- Activities and initiatives implemented by stakeholders to support IPBES, including through national platforms, business engagement, research, country-level assessments, and stronger efforts to include indigenous people and local communities (IPLCs);
- The processes followed to develop the Global Assessment; and
- The development of the Platform's second work programme and ways to enhance stakeholder engagement during the second work programme.

Opening Session

Co-Facilitators Simone Maynard, IUCN, and Xavier Sticker, France, outlined the day's agenda, highlighting that stakeholder networks facilitate information dissemination and increase the impact of IPBES' work.

Throughout the session, participants used Mentimeter, an interactive polling software, to communicate their interests and needs.

Shamila Nair-Bedouelle, on behalf of UNESCO's Director-General Audrey Azoulay, emphasized that stakeholder engagement is essential for the Platform's work, underscoring that halting biodiversity loss requires engagement across society.

Maylis Desrousseaux, Society for Conservation Biology, provided an overview of the Open-Ended Network of IPBES Stakeholders (ONet), including its terms of reference and its main objectives, including communication and dissemination. Malte Timpte, Institute for Biodiversity – Network, Germany, offered an overview of IPBES' structure and mandate, focusing on IPBES-7 agenda and associated decision making.

Adriana Flores Díaz, Ibero-American University, emphasized the importance of participation, noting IPBES' task to incorporate the views, concerns, and knowledge of a diverse group of stakeholders for socially meaningful products. She further underscored the importance of framing available knowledge according to the relevant context to facilitate implementation, as well as the significance of local-global connections.

Joji Cariño, Forest Peoples Programme and Centres of Distinction on Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK), highlighted work under the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IIFBES), and the Centres, stressing the need for synergies and institutional strengthening to enhance participation.

Anne Larigauderie, IPBES Executive Secretary, highlighted: the global assessment as the culmination of IPBES' first work programme; ways for IPBES to "accompany the journey" towards 2030 and sustainable development; and the need for diverse stakeholder participation, including the private sector.

Robert Watson, IPBES Chair, stressed that the global assessment portrays that biodiversity, like climate change, is not only an environmental problem, but also a development, social, moral, equity, and security issue. He cautioned that "unless we deal with both problems, we won't achieve any of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)." He further called for an assessment on the nexus between biodiversity and climate change.

Robert Spaul, IPBES Head of Communications, presented IPBES' communication strategy and work on stakeholder engagement. He noted: the publication of video material; the growing engagements with traditional and social media; activities to promote the launch of the Global Assessment; and new features such as 'stakeholders spotlights' to raise the profile of unheard voices within the community.

Stakeholders' Activities in Support of IPBES: Examples from IPBES National Platforms

Jean-François Silvain, President of the Foundation for Research on Biodiversity (FRB), presented FRB's work in communicating biodiversity research, developing partnerships with businesses, and contributing to IPBES work.

Claire Tutenuit, Entreprises pour l'Environnement, presented Act4nature, an initiative inviting CEOs to commit to include biodiversity considerations in their development strategies and report on relevant implementation. She emphasized the difficulty of measuring "biodiversity action," noting there is no biodiversity equivalent to carbon footprints.

Ingunn Storør, Head of the Technical Support Unit (TSU) on Capacity Building, discussed national platforms and capacity building, as well as the implementation of national and regional assessments.

Claire Brown, UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Center (UNEP-WCMC), discussed a downscaled IPBES assessment project in eight countries, referencing the bidirectional work to engage national activities and foster national engagement in IPBES. François Hiol Hiol, Cameroon's National Platform for Science-Policy Interface on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, underlined the need to formalize the link between national platforms and the IPBES Secretariat.

Hilde Eggermont, Belgian Biodiversity Platform, reported on the Europe and Central Asia Network, a 10-member group that supports follow up to IPBES at the regional level.

Paula Drummond de Castro, Brazilian Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, shared perspectives on a bottom-up initiative supporting national stakeholder consultations, assessments, and reports.

Guadalupe Yesenia Hernández Márquez, Mexico, discussed efforts to engage IPLCs on IPBES and the cultural adaptation of IPBES deliverables. Kiruben Naicker, South Africa, spoke on the status of the national IPBES platform in South Africa.

Participants discussed, among other issues: using existing measures to achieve biodiversity goals; private sector commitments and data sharing; evolution of integration of national platforms, or “nodes,” into IPBES; and indicators for integration and data sharing.

IPBES Global Assessment

Moderator Hien Ngo, Head of the TSU for the Global Assessment, emphasized that the session focused on process and methodology of the Global Assessment, not its content since its findings are not yet finalized.

IPBES Global Assessment Co-Chairs Sandra Díaz, National University of Córdoba, Eduardo Brondizio, Indiana University, and Josef Settele, Helmholtz Center for Environmental Research, outlined the process for the Global Assessment. Díaz stressed that the report is groundbreaking in terms of both procedure and findings, but “will only be valuable if it is taken up by different social actors.” Brondizio addressed *inter alia*: the scoping questions; the assessment storyline; its timing to contribute to the post-2020 biodiversity framework and the SDGs; the selection of authors and reviewers; efforts to systematically incorporate ILK; and the assessment’s overall structure.

Participants discussed: inputs from the business sector; potential conflicts of interest; the probability to realize the necessary transformative change by 2030; engagement with other organizations, including the private sector; and development of assessment-related products for different audiences. Regarding IPLC engagement, participants considered regional coverage, categories of communities, and development of guiding questions.

IPBES Second Work Programme

Using the Mentimeter app, participants expressed their priorities for the Platform’s second work programme, mentioning “climate change” and “transformative change” most often.

Anne Larigauderie, described the development process for the second work programme, noting that three topics were identified as priorities: promoting biodiversity to achieve the 2030 Agenda; understanding the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and determinants of transformative change; and measuring business impact and dependency on biodiversity and nature’s contributions to people. As key actions on these topics, Larigauderie noted: assessing knowledge; building capacity; strengthening the knowledge foundation; supporting policy; communicating and engaging; and reviewing effectiveness.

What is next for IPBES: Improving Engagement in the Second Work Programme

Regarding private sector engagement, Claire Tutenuit stressed the need to portray clear linkages to business activities to mobilize corporate actors. She underscored difficulties around valuing nature, querying its necessity and effect.

Sunandan Tiwari, ICLEI, said investments in nature should not only follow profit orientation noting the need “to also invest in nature for the sake of nature.” Stressing that urbanization has been taken up as a cross-cutting theme in the regional and global assessments, he identified major gaps, including tangible maps for decision making and planning, and easy-to-use indicators.

Florence Daguitan, IIFBES and Centres of Distinction on ILK, focused on ways to better engage IPLCs in IPBES work. Hilde Eggermont highlighted the importance of developing specific skills for fostering effective science-policy dialogue, calling for additional guidance to scientific experts and policy makers to improve mutual learning, and emphasizing building trust.

Peter Bridgewater, IPBES Review Panel, focused on the review process, highlighting key messages: the fact that the transformative impact of IPBES relies on strengthening all four of its functions; the need to reinforce the policy aspects of IPBES work; the significance of maintaining scientific independence while allowing for the co-production of assessments; the need to develop a more strategic and collaborative approach to stakeholder engagement; and the need to resolve budgetary constraints.

Anne Larigauderie emphasized the need for diverse stakeholders to be engaged in every step of the process and in all IPBES functions. She highlighted stakeholders’ role implementing assessment conclusions, offering examples from the pollination assessment. On the budget, she stressed the importance of in-kind contributions, in addition to monetary ones.

During discussions, participants addressed: prioritization of deliverables in the second work programme; concrete ways to improve IPLCs’ integration; details on the technical paper to be co-produced with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC); and bodies that can play an intermediary role in translating IPBES products to messages for wider audiences.

Organization of Stakeholders’ Work

During this session, stakeholders coordinated their inputs and statements on the Global Assessment and other items on the agenda of IPBES-7, including the Platform’s second work programme and follow up to the external review.

Closing

Simone Maynard invited several networks to make closing statements. Paola Fontanella Pisa, Network of Young Earth System Scientists (YESS Network), emphasized that Stakeholder Day provided opportunities for stakeholders to connect and be more engaged. Joji Cariño, IIFBES, stressed that Stakeholder Day should be “the hallmark of IPBES work.” Flore Lafaye de Micheaux, ONet, highlighted the key role of stakeholder engagement, emphasizing the results of the external review. Christophe Aubel, French Agency for Biodiversity, stressed the need to build partnerships with other social actors outside the environmental sector and to communicate IPBES’ work to wider audiences.

Robert Spaull closed Stakeholder Day at 5:42pm.

In the Corridors

The main benefit of the Stakeholder Day, according to most participants, was to introduce many IPBES “newbies” to the procedures of the IPBES Plenary, report on stakeholder activities in support of IPBES, and set the stage for IPBES-7, including the long-awaited finalization of the Global Assessment on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

While the Global Assessment attracted the lion’s share of interest, an IPBES veteran appreciated the presentations on engagement activities by stakeholders offering useful insights on the richness of relevant projects and partnerships, noting these activities “are the backbone of IPBES’ workflow and are vital for disseminating IPBES’ findings on the ground.”

In addition, the discussions on IPBES’ role in supporting the urgent need for transformative change that emerged throughout the day provided a preview of what to expect during the week. While many agreed that IPBES must address transformative change sooner rather than later, opinions diverged on whether a dedicated assessment on the issue is the right way to go, or whether IPBES should embrace transformative change more broadly in all its activities, such as policy support, capacity building, and communication and outreach.

On her way out of the plenary room one delegate quipped “it’s always refreshing to start with stakeholder day and bring everybody up to speed. As a bonus, we received a good preview of the issue that will keep us up at night over the next week: transformative change.”