

IPBES-1 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 5 OCTOBER 2011

The first session of the plenary meeting on the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) reconvened for the third day of deliberations in Nairobi, Kenya. Delegates began reviewing the process and criteria for selecting the host institution or institutions and the physical location of the secretariat. The Friends of the Chair groups on membership to the platform and the rules of procedure met over lunch to resume their efforts to reach consensus.

During the afternoon, the Secretariat introduced the documents on legal issues relating to the establishment of the platform. Delegates also deliberated on the possible work programme for the platform. The evening's session resumed discussions on the functions and structures of bodies that might be established under the platform, focusing on the role of the plenary.

MODALITIES AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR AN IPBES

PROCESS AND CRITERIA FOR SELECTING THE HOST INSTITUTION AND LOCATION: The Secretariat introduced document UNEP/IPBES.MI/1/6 on the process and criteria for selecting the host institution and the location of the secretariat.

Criteria for selecting the host institution: The US noted many countries' support for a proposal from the four sponsor organizations, UNESCO, UNEP, FAO and UNDP and, welcoming the possible submission from these organizations, queried if it was necessary to open this issue. Chair Watson said that IPBES would still benefit from discussions on the elements to be expected in proposals.

GHANA, for the African Group, called for referencing experience on biodiversity and ecosystem services in the selection criteria. The EU and its member states cautioned against prejudging the location to be decided on. SWITZERLAND, KENYA, BARBADOS and others called for the administrative functions of the secretariat to be hosted in one institution. MEXICO noted that the proposed criteria still have gaps which need to be addressed. JAPAN noted that the possible hosts should provide stable financial support. BRAZIL, opposed by CHILE and EGYPT, proposed a secretariat that would work "virtually."

Process for inviting organizations to signify their interest in hosting the secretariat: REPUBLIC OF KOREA, with CÔTE D'IVOIRE, underscored that the process for selecting a host institution is separate from selecting the physical location of the secretariat.

Process for reviewing proposals and selecting the host: The US, opposed by MEXICO, BARBADOS, SWITZERLAND and GHANA, said the Bureau should not undertake a first review of proposals and that governments should have the opportunity to review and discuss all proposals. AUSTRALIA questioned when bids are to be received and circulated. Chair Watson suggested 15 December 2011 as the deadline for bids and proposals, requesting the Secretariat to circulate them shortly thereafter.

Criteria for selecting the physical location of the secretariat: The African Group rejected criteria that would exclude developing countries. The EU and its member states emphasized that the location needs to ensure safety, good governance and efficient resource use. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA, opposed by THAILAND, rejected the presence of international organizations as a criterion for selection, and the PHILIPPINES said only international organizations relevant to biodiversity should be a criterion. THAILAND supported joint country proposals. ETHIOPIA called for considering the specific situation of developing countries citing capacity gaps, natural resource abundance, lack of scientific assessments and the relationship between biodiversity and poverty reduction as possible gauges.

COLOMBIA and many others called for a single location for the secretariat but welcomed considering the establishment of regional hubs. JAPAN, with FIJI, said the use of regional hubs depends on the work programme and the role of subsidiary bodies and, supported by the PHILIPPINES, urged to separate discussions on the secretariat head quarter and regional hubs. AUSTRALIA, with NEW ZEALAND, PERU and others, expressed concern that regional hubs increase bureaucracy and reduce efficiency.

On submitting proposals for the secretariat's physical location, reviewing proposals and selecting the location, the US, supported by AUSTRALIA and others, proposed allowing governments to submit their proposals to the bureau eight weeks prior to the second sessions of the plenary and that these be sent unreviewed to governments after two weeks. CHILE stressed the importance of providing translations. The US, JAPAN, MEXICO, CANADA, EGYPT and THAILAND supported the sole compilation and translation of the bids. AUSTRALIA, supported by NORWAY and BARBADOS, suggested providing an executive summary of submissions. The PHILIPPINES, supported by THAILAND, proposed uniform formats for the bids. Chair Watson proposed that the Bureau with the Secretariat elaborate a draft suggested format for the bids.

LEGAL ISSUES RELATING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PLATFORM: The UNEP Secretariat introduced three documents UNEP/IPBES.MI/1/2, UNEP/IPBES.MI/1/INF./9, UNEP/IPBES.MI/1/CRP.2,

discussing the legal issues relating to the establishment of the platform. He highlighted the three questions addressed to the legal counsel: is there any legal impediment in the options presented for establishing IPBES?; Did the General Assembly (GA) resolution 65/162 establish IPBES!; and is it possible to operationalize IPBES without establishing it?

He noted that the GA resolution did not establish IPBES, that no UN body currently has a mandate to establish IPBES or transform itself into IPBES and that no legal impediment exists for the governments present to establish the body once the scope of the mandate has been defined.

WORK PROGRAMME OF THE PLATFORM: The Secretariat introduced document UNEP/IPBES.MI/1/7 considering the possible work programme of the platform. ARGENTINA said the platform should focus on compiling scientific data. SOUTH AFRICA called for considering: the importance of regional hubs as a mechanism to attract stakeholders; the need for relevant assessments; and capacity building. The US welcomed the possibility of intersessional work for further elaboration on the work programme.

JAPAN highlighted the importance of a regional coordination mechanism and thematic assessments. NEW ZEALAND suggested facilitating a review of status and trends methodologies at the national level and establishing a standing committee on tools and methodologies. BRAZIL emphasized, *inter alia*: hosting data sets; rules to conduct, coordinate and review assessments; and provide standardized guidelines.

TURKMENISTAN, for the Central and Eastern European Group, emphasized using ecosystem approaches in assessing knowledge on ecosystem services. The EU and its member states, JAPAN and the US, emphasized that the work programme should respond to all four IPBES functions. MEXICO highlighted defining what relevant policy information is for decision making and using, *inter alia*, the targets and indicators of the CBD Strategic Plan. CHILE, supported by NORWAY, emphasized: communication; public awareness; networking; and funding. NORWAY also called for activities in the start phase of the platform that will generate media attention.

COLOMBIA asked for strengthening the role of the platform in bridging the science-policy gap through encouraging researchers to submit proposals and enhance the management of science. SWITZERLAND said the work programme's relation to the CBD Strategic Plan needs to be clarified. KENYA suggested that using traditional knowledge (TK) could enhance capacity building and technology transfer. INDONESIA emphasized the role of local researchers and scientists. UGANDA asked for user friendly tools that are accessible to local communities. PERU pointed to the role of intellectual property in knowledge generation for biodiversity protection. EGYPT asked for clarification on the role of intellectual property in knowledge and technology sharing. The US called for a cautious formulation regarding the use of TK, and with ARGENTINA, stated that access to TK should be based on the principle of prior informed consent. The Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education (TEBTEBBA) said it is crucial to coordinate scientists and TK holders.

FIJI supported a bottom-up approach and suggested informal expert meetings as an important source of information. BRAZIL said a broad approach to evaluation of biodiversity and ecosystem services is needed and, opposed by EGYPT and BOLIVIA, highlighted the need for the economic valuation of ecosystems.

The Convention on Migratory Species highlighted existing activities and called for strong links between capacity building, assessment and policy making.

MEXICO emphasized including work on the causes of biodiversity loss, conservation and its sustainable use. The US called for assessment of assessments, supported by NORWAY, and efforts towards developing a common geographically-based

platform in which environmental information may be placed and shared as a public good. The Secretariats of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) jointly stressed the importance of IPBES for the implementation of biodiversity-related conventions.

FUNCTIONS AND STRUCTURES OF BODIES TO BE ESTABLISHED: Delegates resumed discussions on revised draft text on the functions and structures of bodies that might be established under the platform (UNEP/IPBES.MI/1/CRP.3). Chair Watson invited discussion on the functions of the plenary stating that the Friends of the Chair were yet to reach a consensus on membership.

Initial discussions focused on the language regarding inputs from governments, UN bodies and other stakeholders. The US and BRAZIL opposed merging text on this issue as the rules of procedures differentiating governments from UN bodies would be lost.

BOLIVIA emphasized the need to include indigenous peoples as stakeholders and called for establishing a mechanism to ensure participation of civil society. The US proposed referencing "indigenous and local communities" as internationally accepted language. BOLIVIA called for referencing "indigenous peoples and local communities." Following further deliberation, this was supported by BRAZIL and MEXICO. Responding to a suggestion from the US, the term "peoples" remained in brackets.

Regarding establishing a process of prioritization of requests, delegates agreed with text proposed by Argentina and amended by others referencing not only "requests from governments" but also "inputs and suggestions from other stakeholders."

On the election of the chair and vice-chairs, GHANA suggested adding the notion of vice-chairs being appointed on a rotational basis, with BRAZIL and EGYPT noting that this should be on a regional basis. The US, supported by NORWAY, proposed including a reference on selecting the officers of the plenary who will be members of an expanded bureau, if any. The reference was retained in an additional bracketed paragraph pending decision on the IPBES structure, while the original provision was adopted with minor amendments. The PHILIPPINES, supported by MEXICO, remarked that the details on elections be left for the paragraph on officers of the plenary rather than functions.

On overseeing the allocation of the core trust fund, BRAZIL suggested deleting the word "core," NORWAY proposed referencing more "trust funds," the US supported the first and opposed the second amendment, which remained in brackets. Other paragraphs on independently reviewing the platform on a periodic basis, a process for the adoption of reports, rules of procedure and financial rules were adopted with minor amendments.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As the day's discussions started considering the process and criteria for selecting the host institution and the physical location of the IPBES secretariat, some participants were caught comparing the receptions that Kenya and Germany had offered on Monday and Tuesday respectively. Some delegates noted that UNEP has high interests at stake in hosting the secretariat, since this would strengthen its possible role in the broader debate on the International Environmental Governance framework. On the other hand, Germany has given clear signals of its willingness to host IPBES with a concrete proposal and a budget. In essence, the key issue remains how not to disadvantage many developing countries in the bidding process, including *vis-à-vis* safety requirements and additional contributions by the host government as selection criteria.