

IPBES-9 Highlights: Tuesday, 5 July 2022

The third day of the ninth session of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES-9) found delegates once more working late into the night in the two working groups. Working Group 1 (WG1) came very close to finalizing the thematic assessment of the sustainable use of wild species, but due to lack of time, it will be concluded on Wednesday morning. WG2 focused on policy support tools to increase stakeholders' uptake of IPBES products, on the nature futures framework (NFF), and on the scoping report for a methodological assessment of the impact and dependence of business on biodiversity and nature's contributions to people (business and biodiversity assessment).

Working Group 1

In the morning, WG1 Co-Chair Douglas Beard noted a Friends of the Chair group would meet at lunchtime to address figures contained in the summary for policymakers (SPM). Delegates initiated discussion on the status and trends in the use of wild species.

On terrestrial animal harvesting and its outcomes for sustainable use, some members requested reference to governance systems and how they affect sustainability, and the assessment co-chairs underscored that governance issues are covered in a different part of the assessment. Delegates further discussed whether to include references to: pet trade; trade for medicinal uses; migratory species, including birds; trade associated with spread of zoonotic diseases to humans, and unsustainable, illegal, and untraceable trade.

Members removed a list of examples on socio-economic changes that have been negatively affecting the sustainability of hunting for food. They further debated: non-lethal uses of wild animals; a suggestion reflecting the variation in governance of recreational hunting across different regions; and reference to specific examples of species increasing in population size under management systems that allow regulated recreational hunting.

On species most targeted for subsistence and commercial hunting, delegates asked: whether findings referred to all species or just mammals; to clearly define the term "selective hunting"; and to reference genetic impacts.

A paragraph on destructive logging practices and illegal logging received many comments. Delegates clarified whether selective logging can be subsumed under sustainable harvest; included threats to non-target species; specified sustainability depends on implementation rather than plans and techniques; added reduced impact logging practices to a list of more sustainable options; and added nuance on regional trends in illegal deforestation and trade.

One member stressed the need to raise awareness for potential solutions and suggested adding text highlighting sustainable forest management and bioeconomy practices. A delegate suggested that text may be better placed in a later section dealing with tools.

On impacts and benefits from nature-based tourism, delegates sought clarification and consistency regarding terminology,

including on nature-based tourism, wildlife-watching, and observing wild species. The co-chairs will review the SPM and propose consistent terminology.

Members further asked to include references to: health impacts in a list of unintended detrimental effects of wildlife watching; lack of enforcement and regulatory measures to a list of challenges; communication, education, and public awareness raising to a list of mitigation options; and a qualifier to the general trend, accounting for recent effects of the pandemic.

In the afternoon, Co-Chair Woodmatas provided a summary of the discussions in the informal Friends of the Chair group. He noted discussions focused on how to improve infographics to make them easily understandable. Delegates resumed deliberation of the SPM on drivers influencing the sustainability of the use of wild species.

On drivers that impact the abundance and distribution of wild species, members discussed: terminology around landscape and seascape change; whether a list of drivers should be included; and the paragraph's structure.

Regarding climate change as a driver affecting sustainable use, discussions focused on whether to: refer to potential opportunities in addition to challenges; and include changes to mean temperature and precipitation as examples.

Delegates reached agreement, with minor amendments, on text on the relationship between trade shifts from wild species to specimens derived from farmed stocks and relevant regulations.

On the relationship among the sustainable use of wild species, environmental degradation, and people living in poverty, contentious issues included whether to: include numeric elements; refer to the relationship between economic and political systems, poverty and inequity, and unsustainable use of wild species; and refer to affluent countries and unsustainable consumption. Delegates agreed that drivers related to economics and governance can contribute towards unsustainable use.

A paragraph discussing multiple drivers threatening Indigenous Peoples and local communities' (IPLCs) ability to maintain and restore practices associated with sustainable use of wild species was approved with minor changes.

One member suggested an additional key message on land tenure security contributing to sustainable use of wild species. One delegation suggested specifying "land tenure and resource rights." Another member asked for a qualifier, citing cases where granted tenure rights have led to land degradation. With those changes, the proposed text was accepted.

Text on inequitable distribution of costs and benefits from the use of wild species undermining sustainability was approved with additional reference to inequities between communities and generations.

Following up on earlier discussion, a new key message was introduced on gender equality.

On a paragraph discussing the relationship between urbanization and sustainable use, delegates requested additions and clarification related to: the role of rural to urban migration; how peri-urban areas increase pressure; and the relationship between levels of development and unsustainable use. Following explanations from the assessment's co-chairs, the paragraph was adopted with minor changes.

Extended discussions ensued around a paragraph discussing the relationship between global trade in and unsustainable use of wild species. Delegates sought clarification on whether the statement related to: all forms of trade, including illegal and unregulated trade; and trade in wild species or trade in general. Some delegates expressed concern about “demonizing” trade, highlighting its positive contribution to development, potential conservation benefits, and stipulating that the problem was instead illegal trade.

Finally, delegates agreed to always specify global trade in wild species, clarifying this related to wild species “both live, or of their parts and derivatives.” They also agreed to include reference to both global trade resulting in increased use and how regulation, or the lack thereof, can affect unsustainable use of wild species.

Suggested language on the importance of sustainable, legal, and traceable trade for biodiversity-dependent communities was accepted.

On illegal use of and trade in wild species, delegates agreed to refer instead to illegal “harvesting” and trade. On culture, religion, and values, some suggested also reflecting that certain beliefs have facilitated the unsustainable use of wild species.

On science and technology, and their relationship with sustainable use of wild species, delegates agreed to also refer to research. Members further suggested reflecting that biotechnology and industrial processes may provide substitutes for unsustainably harvested species, and referring to the illegal seizure of IPLCs’ land and territories rather than to land grabbing.

In the evening, delegates addressed the remaining text on social and environmental drivers, also discussing two new suggested paragraphs on conflict situations and on education.

Turning to a sub-section on common principles of sustainable use in international standards and agreements, delegates agreed to refer to “key elements” rather than “common principles.”

Text on conceptualizations of sustainable use and development of targets and indicators, and on available indicators was agreed with editorial changes and a reference to efforts undertaken by all actors to address existing knowledge gaps, concluding work on the status of trend in the use of wild species.

Delegates then turned to key elements and conditions for the sustainable use of wild species, and continued with pathways and levers to enhance the sustainability of the use of wild species. Discussions will continue.

Working Group 2

In the morning, WG2 continued discussing work on policy support tools to increase stakeholders’ uptake of IPBES products, particularly on the development of fact sheets. Delegates exchanged views on whether these are new products or simply communications about existing products, and whether IPBES members should review their content, or only the process for developing them.

Delegates then turned to the NFF draft and considered the diagram on using the NFF to define pathways toward sustainable futures. Some raised concerns on a relevant diagram; others proposed title changes from “sustainable” to “desirable” futures.

On paragraphs discussing the unique features of the NFF, delegates raised a number of concerns, including ensuring a reference to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (GBF) appears in the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and referencing that the NFF can be used to develop scenarios representing a diversity of desirable futures. They exchanged views on whether to make references to multilateral environmental agreements and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and continued working through paragraphs, considering deleting unnecessary ones.

On a paragraph on concluding remarks, delegates considered: whether to list examples of scientific and practitioner communities and stakeholders; and whether to use the term “nature and people” or “nature including people.” They coalesced around “people and nature,” agreeing to use it uniformly across the document.

Discussion then turned to the work plan to provide support for the scenarios and models of biodiversity, and ecosystem functions and services for 2022-2023.

On further developing the draft methodological guidance on using the NFF, delegates reflected earlier discussions on the NFF

and considered replacing “using” the NFF to “testing” it and “discussing its limits and opportunities.” There was a suggestion to mention that work undertaken will consider challenges faced in adapting the NFF to national contexts. After discussions on implementation challenges faced by both developing and developed countries, delegates agreed to simply mention “potential challenges” in applying the NFF.

On the debate over whether to include reference to scenarios’ inability to incorporate policy objectives related to “human well-being” or “good quality of life,” delegates approved referring to “good quality of life.”

On case studies to catalyze the further development of scenarios and models for future IPBES assessments, participants agreed to collaborate with the task force on Indigenous Peoples, in addition to that on knowledge and data.

In the afternoon, WG2 resumed considering text on the development of fact sheets. A lunch-hour drafting group proposed compromise language, which delegates commented and agreed on. Members agreed the fact sheets would: be pilots; cover the sustainable use and values assessments, and a draft of the IAS assessment; not be publicized until the relevant SPMs are approved; and not be subject to content review.

Discussions then turned to the scoping report for the business and biodiversity assessment (IPBES/9/8). The Secretariat presented the Chair’s note on the scoping document, and the draft decision (IPBES/9/1/Add.2).

In their discussion of the scoping report, delegates engaged extensively on the first paragraph on scope. Members debated on whether to explain in detail what the assessment covers, with some highlighting the title already makes clear this is a methodological, not a full, assessment, and others emphasizing the need for clarity on what a “methodological assessment” includes.

They also exchanged views on:

- including references to the precautionary principle, the three CBD objectives, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs;
- whether to refer to “the financial sector” generally or “financial institutions” specifically; and
- specific references to small- and medium-sized enterprises and the informal workforce.

One member observed a disproportionate emphasis thus far on businesses’ negative impact on biodiversity, saying this report provides a unique opportunity to consider positive impacts. Discussions on the scope will continue.

On the rationale, delegates again requested referencing the CBD and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Delegates agreed to consider merging the sections on scope and rationale to simplify the text.

In the evening, delegates returned to discussion on the NFF, following an afternoon of negotiating with interested delegates. There was general agreement to include an “elegant” subtitle explaining what the NFF is. They also agreed on a preamble expanding on the NFF’s purpose and function, reference to the NFF being a tool for users, and several edits for clarity and repetition. Discussions continued into the night.

In the Corridors

“We have solutions for everything; the question is will everyone like our solutions?” Experts were heard asking this question after another tough day of negotiations. Despite fatigue, there was cause for satisfaction. WG1 came very close to finalizing its work on the sustainable use assessment. Accomplishing this difficult but important task on Wednesday morning will undoubtedly bring smiles in the faces of delegates, which may wane as delegates will have to move straight to the discussions of the equally demanding values assessment.

Similar concerns, and tired delegates, started to show in the scoping document for the business and biodiversity assessment in WG2. In fact, at one point there were so many brackets, one delegate was heard remarking “this looks like CBD text on the post-2020 framework.” The experts, however, were on to something, because as deliberations resumed in the evening, their suggestions were largely accepted. Heading into the evening, some felt that tangible progress was being made.