

IPBES 12 Highlights: Tuesday, 3 February 2026

Following the largest-ever Stakeholder Day in the history of the Platform, the 12th Plenary session of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES 12) opened with delegates expressing strong resolve to preserve the Platform's scientific integrity and deliver a new assessment that will foster private sector engagement in biodiversity action. Many expressed disappointment at the US' intention to withdraw from IPBES and emphasized the need to safeguard the Platform's capacity to continue its work.

Opening Segment

IPBES 12 opened with a performance by [Bionic and the Wires](#), who use bionic arms to transform mushrooms' and plants' bio-electrical signals into music and visual art.

Welcoming delegates, IPBES Chair David Obura highlighted that the Business and Biodiversity Assessment, which will be finalized at IPBES 12, will lay out tools to support businesses' transformation to sustainability as well as measures for governments to foster such transformation. He noted that IPBES 12 will also reflect on the effectiveness of the Platform and additional work to be conducted up to 2030, emphasizing the importance of budgetary support from all members and novel sources.

Emma Reynolds, UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs, emphasized the urgency of multilateral action to reverse biodiversity loss at a time when some step back from international cooperation. She urged protecting IPBES as "an organization that tells the truth" in an age of misinformation and short-term thinking, and lauded the private sector actors that have already recognized that nature-positive investments are central to their future.

Speaking on behalf of the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), as IPBES' four UN partners, Kaveh Zahedi, FAO, underlined the crucial role of IPBES in mobilizing finance at scale and called the upcoming Business and Biodiversity Assessment "catalytic" in this regard.

Astrid Schomaker, Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), lauded IPBES as a "bedrock" in establishing the facts of biodiversity loss and stressed the importance of IPBES' assessments for achieving the goals and targets of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), including in informing the GBF stocktake to take place at the 17th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 17) to the CBD in October 2026.

In a video message, Inger Andersen, Executive Director, UNEP, highlighted the vital work of IPBES during times of deep global fragmentation, as science remains a truth that "cannot be negotiated, delayed, or compromised." Noting that nature loss is a systemic economic risk, she underscored the importance of the Business and Biodiversity Assessment.

IPBES Executive Secretary Luthando Dziba reflected on the "exciting" work ahead at IPBES 12, underscoring the relevance of IPBES' work to decision-making across different sectors. He called on the IPBES community to think creatively about how to bring completed assessments to life so as to foster meaningful impact around the world.

Ghana, on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, pointed out that examples and policy pathways in the Business and Biodiversity Assessment do not reflect the realities of African businesses and lamented the lack of representation of African experts and limited participation of African members in IPBES. Noting the low financial levels of IPBES, they urged businesses and the private sector to contribute so as to maintain the Platform's sustainability.

Indonesia, on behalf of the ASIA-PACIFIC GROUP, noted the mid-term review findings that provide guidance for strengthening the governance and connectivity of IPBES. Highlighting the progress made with the Business and Biodiversity Assessment, they called on member states to align their policies and financial frameworks to implement its findings.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, on behalf of EASTERN EUROPE, suggested that the growth and increasingly diverse nature of the IPBES stakeholder community and the media interest in IPBES' work reflect the growing recognition that biodiversity loss requires active involvement across sectors. They emphasized the importance of capacity-building and called for increasing private sector resource mobilization.

Colombia, for the GROUP OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (GRULAC), lamented the current geopolitical tensions, expressing hope that the US will once again be part of IPBES. They emphasized the need to preserve the scientific rigor of IPBES' work and called for addressing emerging issues in a timely manner and enhancing regional uptake of IPBES deliverables.

Cyprus, on behalf of the EU, welcomed the three EU member states that joined IPBES in 2025. Regretting the US' decision to leave the Platform, they said biodiversity loss calls for "engagement, not withdrawal" and underlined the value of the Business and Biodiversity Assessment towards implementing the GBF, the Paris Agreement, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development despite "challenging" timeframes for the Assessment's adoption.

Switzerland, for JUSSCANNZ (Australia, Canada, Iceland, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, and the UK) stressed the "essential contribution" of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to IPBES' work. They reiterated that the "science itself is not negotiable" and said that summaries must faithfully reflect the underlying assessment and remain free from political interference.

ARMENIA, incoming Presidency of CBD COP 17, expressed hope that the new assessment will provide an important benchmark for the private sector in furthering nature-positive strategies. They called for concrete and measurable steps to achieve the goals and targets of the GBF.

FRANCE announced an additional contribution of EUR 300,000 to support the work of IPBES. They highlighted that science is a pre-condition for credible and strong diplomacy, and underscored the opportunity of the upcoming Assessment to show businesses that they can "develop with nature, not against it."

The OPEN-ENDED NETWORK OF IPBES STAKEHOLDERS (ONet) underscored the impact of IPBES processes, where shaping the pathway from knowledge to action becomes a shared responsibility and the effect of science remains undiminished. Highlighting the positive impact of stakeholder diversity, they noted IPBES as an example for inclusive science processes.

The INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS FORUM ON BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES (IIFBES) lamented the lack of funding for the participation of Indigenous Peoples in IPBES sessions. Underscoring that support for Indigenous Peoples and local communities is "not charity, but an investment," they urged businesses to view them as partners in shaping a sustainable future, include them as active participants in decision-making, and ensure sufficient benefit-sharing and compensation.

Plenary

Organizational matters, admission of observers, and credentials: Chair Obura introduced the provisional agenda

([IPBES/12/1](#) and [Add.1](#)), which the Plenary adopted. He suggested, and delegates agreed, to convene: Working Group (WG) 1 on the Business and Biodiversity Assessment, to be co-chaired by IPBES Vice-Chair Floyd Homer (Latin American and Caribbean States) and Bureau member Eeva Primmer (Western Europe and Other States, WEOG); WG 2 on all remaining agenda items, to be co-chaired by Bureau member Hesiquio Benítez Díaz (Latin American and Caribbean States) and Sebastian König (WEOG); and a Contact Group on financial and budgetary arrangements, to be chaired by Bureau member Erik Grigoryan. Responding to the DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (DRC), the Secretariat clarified that the Chair's informal notes are meant to facilitate deliberations, are informal in nature, and will be considered in conjunction with the respective agenda items.

Delegates welcomed five new members: Malta, Cyprus, Rwanda, Iceland, and Poland. Chair Obura noted that the US had announced its intention to withdraw from IPBES. The DRC called for clarifications, specifically whether this announcement is considered a formal communication with legal consequences; and what the impact of this announcement on the work of the Platform might be and how progress in the implementation of its work programme may be safeguarded. Executive Secretary Dziba replied that for now, only an informal announcement had been shared, with the understanding that the US will submit a formal communication. The Secretariat's legal advisor recalled that IPBES is an intergovernmental platform with voluntary members, not a treaty body requiring formal accession or withdrawal. He noted that, should a member wish to withdraw, it would send a notification to the Secretariat as a purely factual matter, which would be sufficient. DRC underscored the need to reflect on the consequences of the US' withdrawal, including its financial impact, and encouraged others to financially support the Platform's work.

Chair Obura noted that IPBES 12 is expected to elect new members to the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) to serve for a three-year term starting at the closure of IPBES 12, with all nominees ([IPBES/12/INF/2](#)) found to be eligible. He invited regional and interregional consultations and suggested conducting the election during the stocktaking plenary on Friday, 6 February. IPBES Members welcomed 85 new observers as recommended by the Bureau ([IPBES/12/INF/3/Rev.1](#)) and decided to continue using the interim procedure for observers' admission, pending agreement on the draft policy and procedures for the admission of observers ([IPBES/12/3](#)). Chair Obura urged delegates' timely submission of credentials.

Progress in the implementation of the rolling work programme of the Platform up to 2030: Executive Secretary Dziba presented the report ([IPBES/12/4](#)), highlighting the success of past assessments and pointing to ongoing assessments to be completed in the next few years. He provided a brief overview of the work of the Bureau, the MEP, and the task forces.

Robert Spaul, IPBES Secretariat, presented statistics highlighting the Platform's growing visibility in traditional and social media and the success of the [IPBES podcast](#). In terms of stakeholder engagement, he underlined activities to facilitate the uptake of the Nexus and the Transformative Change Assessments as well as support to the self-organizing networks of IPBES.

Delegates heard updates from the respective Co-Chairs on the progress of: the methodological assessment on monitoring biodiversity and nature's contributions to people (Monitoring Assessment), which will be finalized in 2026; the methodological assessment of integrated biodiversity-inclusive spatial planning and ecological connectivity (Spatial Planning Assessment), which will be finalized in 2027; and the second global assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services, which will be finalized in 2028.

Jim Skea, Chair, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), highlighted the interaction between IPBES and the IPCC, underscoring that collaboration is within their respective mandates. He noted that beyond formal links such as co-sponsoring workshops on biodiversity and climate change, they have an overlapping scientific community that is actively working on the interface of both spheres.

Financial and budgetary arrangements: Executive Secretary Dziba presented the relevant document ([IPBES/12/5](#)). He outlined the contributions received in 2025, which includes in-kind contributions from experts and institutions and cash contributions from member states, particularly from the EU, Germany, and the UK. Dziba welcomed the swift pledges made by Malta and Cyprus, who recently joined the Platform. He also presented the expenditure for 2024, estimated expenditure for 2025, and proposed budget for 2026-2028, and highlighted ongoing fundraising efforts, including with philanthropies. He noted the Budget Contact Group will discuss, among others, opportunities for member states to contribute to the Platform, budget scenarios and their implications, and fundraising activities.

Acknowledging the funding gap resulting from the US' withdrawal, Chair Obura urged member states to step up their contributions to enable IPBES to implement its targets, stressing the need to raise USD 2.5 million per year to address the gap between the budget and current expenditure. JAPAN pledged USD 200,000 to the Trust Fund for 2026, along with continued in-kind support for the Technical Support Unit (TSU) of the Task Force on Scenarios and Models of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, and encouraged other countries to join funding efforts. Noting a contribution of GBP 1.3 million in 2025, the UK pledged GBP 500,000 towards the Trust Fund for 2026. Chair Obura welcomed the pledges and invited additional contributions by others.

Methodological assessment of the impact and dependence of business on biodiversity and nature's contributions to people:

Chair Obura pointed to the relevant documents ([IPBES/12/6](#), [/1/Add.2](#), [/INF/1](#), [/INF/5](#)). He proposed that the Chair's informal

note ([/Other/1](#)), along with the relevant draft decision ([/1/Add.2](#)), inform consideration of this matter by WG 1. Executive Secretary Dziba noted that WG 1 will consider the Summary for Policymakers (SPM) in detail with a view to approving it, and that Plenary will be invited to accept the underlying assessment chapters, based on the understanding that authors will implement any editorial changes and corrections necessary to ensure consistency with the approved SPM.

Building capacity, strengthening knowledge foundations, and supporting policy: Chair Obura presented the relevant documents ([IPBES/12/7](#), [/1/Add.2](#), and [/INF/10-16](#)). Members agreed to assign consideration of this item to WG 2 and to use the Chair's informal note ([/Other/2](#)) and the relevant draft decision text ([/1/Add.2](#)) as a basis for their deliberations.

Improving the effectiveness of the Platform: Chair Obura presented the relevant documents ([IPBES/12/8](#), [/1/Add.2](#) and [/INF/20-21](#)) and thanked the review panel and consultants for completing the review. The item was assigned to WG 2.

Additional elements of the rolling work programme of the Platform up to 2030: Chair Obura presented the relevant documents ([IPBES/12/9](#), [/9/Add.1](#), [/1/Add.2](#), and [/INF/22](#)), as well as a Chair's informal note ([/Other/3](#)). The Plenary agreed to assign this item to WG 2.

Organization of the Plenary: Chair Obura presented the relevant documents ([IPBES/12/10](#) and [/1/Add.2](#)). Noting the challenges of organizing two plenary sessions in 2026, he underlined the Bureau's recommendation to hold IPBES 13 during the second half of 2027 and for it to consider both the Monitoring and Spatial Planning Assessments. He invited members to submit proposals to host IPBES 13. This item will be considered during the stocktaking plenary on Friday, 6 February.

UN collaborative partnership arrangement for the work of the Platform and its Secretariat: Julie Bélanger, FAO, presented the progress report on the UN collaborative partnership agreement ([IPBES/12/INF/23](#)) on behalf of IPBES' four UN partners, highlighting both direct support provided to the IPBES Secretariat as well as broader support for the implementation of the rolling work programme.

Working Group I

WG 1 Co-Chair Homer outlined the Group's working method, noting it will convene every day until Friday with the objective to conclude work by Saturday, 7 February. Assessment Co-Chairs Matt Jones and Ximena Rueda Fajardo provided a short presentation, outlining the SPM's structure and its overall narrative. They delineated responses to review comments, including on the term "Indigenous Peoples and local communities." Stressing the aim to adequately address businesses as a key audience, they also noted that four substantive issues that surfaced during the review have not yet been fully addressed: roles and responsibilities of businesses; role of governments; striking

a balance between an accessible and ambitious report; and the discourse around profit and capitalism.

Co-Chair Homer invited introductory remarks, noting that discussions will then address the SPM's key messages. Delegates outlined their expectations for the approval of the SPM, with several emphasizing the need to accurately reflect the underlying chapters. Many delegates welcomed the Assessment, noting its timeliness, scientific robustness, and straightforward guidance provided to policymakers and the private sector. Some stressed that businesses have already initiated nature-positive efforts, while others noted that businesses are not doing enough and current conditions are not adequate to achieve a just and sustainable future.

Many also noted the Assessment's relevance for achieving the goals and targets of the GBF, particularly Target 15, and in demonstrating the reliance of businesses on biodiversity. Various delegates stressed the Assessment's value for the process of updating and implementing National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs).

One delegate emphasized that the SPM should: maintain the distinction between scientific evidence and innovative approaches; be accessible to businesses; and take into consideration stakeholders responsible for business decision-making. They underscored the need for a balanced narrative between voluntary action by businesses and the need for policy and regulatory frameworks from governments. Another appreciated the Assessment's highlighting of the shortcomings of current economic and financial conditions, noting this helps clarify why voluntary initiatives may not be sufficient on their own. One member stressed that key messages should be usable by both policymakers and the private sector, suggesting the SPM is currently too geared toward the latter.

Various delegates urged stressing in the SPM that stakeholders can take biodiversity action now and highlighting the value of creating an enabling environment where business and biodiversity can thrive. In addition, one member proposed ranking the response options in Table 1 according to their effectiveness and integrating the interlinkages between different response options in the text. Several delegations welcomed the Assessment's emphasis on enabling environments, but cautioned that implementation should be context-sensitive and equitable, with several pointing out that the findings' applicability varies across regional contexts.

Noting the Assessment refers to climate change mitigation by businesses, one delegate reiterated its view that mitigation action must be nationally-determined, non-prescriptive, and not sector-specific. They also underlined the crucial role of means of implementation (finance, capacity-building, and technology transfer) to enable businesses to contribute to biodiversity, climate, and land degradation commitments.

One delegate lauded the Assessment for highlighting the link between business and human wellbeing.

Another called for: stronger language and clarity by reducing the use of "can" in key messages; explicit assessment of values, scenarios, and models; and consistency of terms with language found in other UN processes, pointing to the concept of "nature's contribution to people." Another welcomed the "systemic framing" adopted by the SPM and stressed giving due attention to small and medium-sized enterprises. One delegation lamented the "inadequate integration" of Indigenous and local knowledge systems.

One delegate noted they will propose the inclusion of additional figures and tables and another suggested improvements in terms of their visualization to better engage the business community.

Other comments related to, among others:

- integrating biodiversity in supply chain management;
- taking into account conditions in developing countries, where data availability and capacities significantly differ;
- considering the individual capacity of businesses and avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach to corporate responsibility;
- ensuring that businesses share the benefits of any value derived from biodiversity, with one delegation emphasizing sharing benefits derived from Indigenous knowledge and another highlighting the issue of digital sequence information;
- mentioning human rights in the SPM, as business activities degrading biodiversity can undermine the rights to life, water, and food, among others; and
- the need for more capacity-building to support the business sector.

In The Corridors

The Plenary session opened with a mesmerizing inter-species performance in which human artists were joined on stage by plants and fungi, whose electrochemical signals were converted into musical output with the help of bionic arms. "If mushrooms can make music, business can certainly contribute to halting biodiversity loss," joked one observer, referencing the crucial Business and Biodiversity Assessment to be approved at this session.

However, the soothing beat of mushroom music could not assuage the widespread concern about the US' announcement to withdraw from IPBES. Many delegates recalled the vital contributions of US-based scientists and institutions to IPBES' past work, and expressed hope that the departure would only be temporary. Not least of all, the US was a key funder of IPBES and its withdrawal will require creative solutions to safeguard the Platform's long-term financial and operational viability.

"Everyone has something they can give in return for the value they derive from IPBES," noted a delegate. Some pointed to the signaling power of even small contributions by member states, while others were looking toward the private sector. Countries could also spearhead initiatives to foster uptake of IPBES products, including at the regional level, highlighted another delegate. "Everyone can do their part to support the Platform."