

## IPBES 12 Highlights: Wednesday, 4 February 2026

The nitty gritty negotiations on the Summary for Policymakers (SPM) of the new Assessment began in earnest. Looking at the slow pace of discussions held in the morning, the Working Group (WG) 1 Co-Chairs decided to convene an evening session. WG 2, by contrast, made swift progress, reaching agreement on all workplans for 2026-27 and considering the findings of the Platform's external review.

### *Working Group 1 – Business and Biodiversity Assessment*

WG 1 Co-Chair Eeva Primmer (Western Europe and Other States, WEOG) invited further general comments on the SPM. One delegate suggested to foster focus on uptake opportunities, with another suggesting the SPM should be more prescriptive. A third delegation expressed concern that the SPM does not adequately address the responsibility of businesses in addressing the underlying causes of biodiversity loss.

Steve Polasky, Co-Chair of the Business and Biodiversity Assessment, presented the SPM's first Key Message (KM), emphasizing that all businesses depend on and impact biodiversity. He delineated changes made to the message's body in response to review comments, including adding language on failing to account for nature, clarifying the associated change in nature's contribution to people, and highlighting the connection to climate change.

Comments first focused on the chapeau of **KM 1**. One country suggested making explicit that larger enterprises have larger dependencies and impacts on biodiversity, which the authors rejected, saying that size is not a proxy for impact. Delegates accepted a proposal to call businesses “agents of positive change” rather than “positive agents of change.”

Turning to the body of KM 1, Members settled on a proposal to add “including ecosystem services” after “nature's contribution to people,” with one delegation calling for context to a reference to “14 out of 18 categories” of nature's contributions to people showing decline. On benefits to people and decline in biodiversity having been unequally distributed “across and within countries,” one Member questioned the rationale for mentioning in-country variation, while another asked whether the authors had looked specifically into inequalities between developed and developing countries.

Countries debated at length whether to state that the decline in biodiversity and nature's contributions to people “is” or “has become increasingly apparent as” a critical systemic risk threatening the economy, financial stability, and human wellbeing, eventually settling on “has become a critical systemic risk.” One delegation urged specifying that it threatens human rights, while others preferred the original formulation of “human wellbeing.” The authors drew attention to the fact that language on human rights could be better integrated in Background Message 7. Noting disagreement, Co-Chair Primmer suggested revisiting this issue at a later stage.

Some delegations proposed deleting the reference to climate change, stressing the need to keep the message clear and focused on biodiversity loss. Others preferred retaining it and adding pollution as another environmental risk. One delegation suggested adding language on steering away from “the limited paradigm of economic growth.” Agreeing that the message should be straightforward, delegates agreed to retain only systemic risks arising from biodiversity decline.

Delegates also debated whether lack of awareness is the sole cause for businesses' inaction. Several offered alternative wording to make it clear that there are other causes. They agreed to underscore that businesses' lack of action is “in part due to their lack of awareness.”

The Group then turned to **KM 2**, with Co-Chair Primmer noting it focuses on the problem, while KM 3 centers on actions. Members made various proposals to introduce some nuance to the statement that the “current conditions in which businesses operate perpetuate systemic risks and are not compatible with achieving a just and sustainable future.” The authors eventually proposed, and delegates agreed, to state that the current “external” conditions are not “always” compatible with achieving a just and sustainable future and perpetuate systemic risks. One delegation suggested referring to achieving “transformative change and sustainable development” to align with the scoping document, noting the same comment applies throughout the SPM.

With regard to the body of KM 2, several Members strongly favored referencing the “interconnected crises of climate change and pollution” when talking about the barriers preventing businesses from halting and reversing biodiversity loss. Other

Members opposed, saying the text should remain concise and focus on biodiversity. The authors opined that this would be a fitting place to add such a reference. Co-Chair Primmer suggested revisiting this point at a later stage.

Over the lunch break, an informal group convened to discuss the figure and tables included in the SPM, facilitated by Shizuka Hashimoto, Co-Chair of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP).

In the afternoon, discussions on KM 2 continued. Regarding the quantitative examples of public subsidies driving nature's decline, related to agriculture and fossil fuels, among others, one delegate suggested using more up-to-date figures from the [State of Finance for Nature](#) published by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), noting this could avoid the issue of accounting for inflation. With Co-Chair Primmer noting that UNEP's report was published after the finalization of the Assessment, some delegations cautioned against using data that are not reflected in the underlying chapters. Co-Chair Primmer will circulate a non-paper on the suggested revisions. Other delegates proposed deleting the quantitative examples related to specific sectors altogether to simplify the message.

On ecological timescales not aligning with business timescales, one delegate proposed adding ecosystem restoration as an example. Another delegate pointed to the language in the background message, and suggested referring to "ecological cycles (such as ecosystem regeneration)."

The authors then introduced **KM 3**, stressing its focus on actions that can be taken to create a favorable enabling environment. They noted the message's short body is due to further detail being contained in an accompanying figure and table, which are discussed separately.

In relation to both the chapeau and the body of KM 3, there were lengthy discussions about referring to "collaborative" rather than "collective" action, in addition to "individual action," which one Member preferred and many opposed. The authors proposed, and Members ultimately agreed, to use the formulation "collaboration, collective, and individual action."

One Member noted the Chair's informal note contained around 14,000 words and asked whether the word limit of 8,500 words stipulated in the scoping document was still applicable. In light of this, they suggested merging KM 3 and KM 10. The authors replied that the latest edits in response to governments' comments had increased the word count and acknowledged a trade-off between concision and detail. On the proposed merger, they explained that KM 10 was intended to summarize the narrative of the SPM and expressed their preference for retaining that message as is.

Other minor edits made to the body of KM 3 related to the list of actors to collaborate in the creation of enabling environments.

Delegates had a lengthy discussion on **KM 4**, both in the afternoon and evening. The authors noted the purpose of the

message is to highlight the need and urgency of businesses to take action. Rather than refer to business actions "positively affecting" impacts and dependencies, members agreed the chapeau should state that "all businesses have a responsibility to address their impacts and dependencies."

Turning to the message's body, much of the debate centered on the idea that "the appropriate level of responsibility to act is a societal decision," with some expressing concern that this may open the door for businesses not to take any accountability. After considering alternative formulations proposed by various delegations, broad agreement seemed to be reached to state that "the level of responsibility of individual businesses to act can be informed by the scale of their impacts and dependencies on biodiversity and nature's contributions to people." One Member insisted on the reference to the level of responsibility being a "societal decision." With many delegates disagreeing, WG 1 Co-Chair Floyd Homer suggested to bracket the reference and return to it at a later stage.

One delegate suggested businesses have a "rights-based" responsibility to act, which others opposed. On a suggestion to replace "nature's contributions to people" with "natural resources," the authors noted the former is standard IPBES language. Delegates further discussed whether to refer to the "size, sector, and structure" of businesses. Some delegations noted that this was not the proper place for such inclusion, while one delegation stressed that this was an important part of KM 4.

On a suggestion to add reference to local capacity and resources, the authors noted that this is better placed in KM 5, considering that KM 4 highlights the existence of methods for measuring both impacts and dependencies of businesses, while KM 5 refers to the application and uptake of methods. Another delegate asked for a footnote to provide concrete examples of existing methods.

On understanding and managing impacts leading to changes in dependencies, one delegation sought clarification whether understanding and managing dependencies can also influence impacts. Authors noted that they can potentially influence each other. Delegates also discussed how to reference the mitigation hierarchy, ultimately settling on "to avoid, then to minimize, to restore, and to offset impacts."

Discussion on KM 4 will continue on Thursday, 5 February.

### ***Working Group 2 – Remaining Agenda Items***

**Building capacity, strengthening knowledge foundations, and supporting policy:** WG 2 Co-Chair Hesiquio Benítez Díaz (Latin American and Caribbean States) recalled the mandate to consider proposed workplans for the intersessional period until IPBES 13 related to: capacity-building; data and knowledge management; knowledge generation catalysis; Indigenous and local knowledge systems; policy instruments, policy support tools, and methodologies; and scenarios and models. He welcomed comments received on the drafts ahead of the session, noting

that the Chair's informal note ([IPBES/12/Other/2](#)) reflects corresponding changes.

Delegates heard an update from the task forces on capacity-building, data and knowledge management, Indigenous and local knowledge, and scenarios and models, as well as the MEP and the Bureau, who highlighted progress made since IPBES 11 and outlined the proposed workplans for 2026-2027. Highlights related to, among others: strong interest in the fellowship programme 10 years after its inception; a code of practice on the use of artificial intelligence ([IPBES/12/INF/12](#)); the development of a knowledge gap database; the provision of *ad hoc* advice on Indigenous and local knowledge; webinars with the Rio Convention Secretariats and others to brief IPBES authors about developments in multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs); and work on Indigenous future thinking.

Delegates' comments related to, among others: enhancing coherence in delivering on the objectives, as recommended in the mid-term review of the rolling work programme, especially considering resource constraints; ensuring regional balance in the fellowship programme; calls for more country-specific support to foster uptake; and ensuring that AI use does not deepen existing inequalities.

Delegates reflected on proposed changes to the workplans. On the workplan for objective 2 (building capacity), one delegation suggested specifying that dialogues with national focal points could address recommendations identified in the mid-term review and options to support the use and uptake of IPBES products. Members supported this and other suggestions, reaching agreement on all workplans. Further discussions under this item will focus on indicators for measuring the workplans' implementation.

**Improving the effectiveness of the Platform:** WG 2 Co-Chair Sebastian König (WEOG) pointed to the external review of the Platform ([IPBES/12/INF/20](#)), its summary ([IPBES/12/8](#), Annex II), and the initial response by the MEP, Bureau, and Executive Secretary ([INF/21](#)). He noted the relevant draft decision mandates the Bureau and MEP to conduct intersessional work ahead of IPBES 13 with a view to proposing responses to the review recommendations, and suggested discussions at IPBES 12 serve to inform this work.

The external review panel recalled it considered: institutional arrangements; procedures for the preparation of deliverables; online working arrangements and lessons from COVID-19; and IPBES' policy impact. The review showcased IPBES' strong productivity, high level of scientific integrity, increasing visibility, and significant advances in integrating diverse knowledge. Challenges related to, among others: fast-track assessments; government uptake; alignment with MEA's needs; managing concurrent assessment processes; participation imbalances; and retention of institutional knowledge. Noting the need to consider budgetary implications, the panel identified priority

recommendations to enhance the Platform's effectiveness, including: strengthening the diversity and capacity of the MEP; enhancing the capacity of national focal points; and diversifying fundraising.

IPBES Executive Secretary Luthando Dziba provided a short response, also on behalf of the Bureau. He underscored that while IPBES 13 will consider the approval of two SPMs, this will be done in a sequential manner rather than in parallel, also noting that both are fast-track assessments. He further pointed to, among others, the collective responsibility of Member States and regions to foster balance within the MEP, and constraints to the Secretariat's fundraising capacity, noting the relevant position had been vacant for several years. In its response, the MEP touched upon possible improvements related to, among others, the onboarding of new MEP members and promoting diversity at the nomination stage. The Secretariat highlighted its ongoing work to support IPBES' various bodies in fulfilling their roles, and emphasized the importance of additional contributions to support the Platform's effectiveness, including through staff secondments to support the Secretariat's fundraising efforts.

Turning to the draft decision, one delegation suggested to, among others: issue a call for submissions for Members, observers, and stakeholders to suggest responses to the review recommendations; for the Bureau and MEP to take these submissions into account in the preparation of proposed responses ahead of IPBES 13; and encourage Members and observers to take into account the review recommendations in their interactions with the Platform. Several delegations emphasized the need to consider cost implications of proposed responses.

### ***In The Corridors***

Like the song title of a legendary rock band from Manchester, negotiations on the second day of IPBES 12 proceeded "little by little." And so it took a while for the first applause to erupt in Working Group 1 as delegates slowly ploughed through the Summary for Policymakers of the Business and Biodiversity Assessment.

Clapping was much more frequent in the room across the hall, where delegates in Working Group 2 approved several workplans for the intersessional period up to IPBES 13. Observers familiar with proceedings in other multilateral environmental processes quietly lauded the practice of collecting government comments on draft texts ahead of the session and starting negotiations on the basis of revised texts incorporating suggestions in track-changes. "This really speeds things up," reflected one delegate.

Working Group 1, by contrast, continued negotiating deep into the night – with a view to making early progress and in the hope of preventing further hold-ups down the line. And so the theme of the day became another Oasis song title: "Talk tonight."

**Follow daily coverage and photos of  
12th Session of the IPBES Plenary  
and Stakeholder Day**



[enb.iisd.org](http://enb.iisd.org)



subscribe at [bit.ly/enbupdate](https://bit.ly/enbupdate)



[@enb.iisd.org](https://twitter.com/enb.iisd.org)



[/earth-negotiations-bulletin](https://www.linkedin.com/company/earth-negotiations-bulletin)

