

## IPBES 12 Highlights: Thursday, 5 February 2026

Delegates engaged in frank discussions on potential additional work to be conducted until 2030. While there was strong appetite for addressing the issue of pollution, delegates reflected on cost implications and the expected uptake of different deliverable formats. The Budget Contact Group convened throughout the afternoon to inform these reflections. Members also continued their consideration of the Business and Biodiversity Assessment.

### Working Group I – Business and Biodiversity Assessment

Working Group (WG) 1 Co-Chair Floyd Homer invited continued views on the body of **Key Message 4** (KM 4). On businesses contributing to system-level changes, one Member requested, and delegates agreed, to change “system-level changes” to “an enabling environment.” To avoid greenwashing, one country called for adding language on businesses having “clear guidelines,” which the authors opposed. Another delegation proposed specifying that biodiversity outcomes be “verifiable.”

Authors then introduced **KM 5**, reminding delegates that it should be considered in conjunction with KM 6 and KM 7, to holistically see the messages that focus on methods for measuring impacts and dependencies. They highlighted that KM 5 emphasizes that action can “already” be taken by businesses.

Members proposed several changes to the chapeau. They agreed to refer to the existence of not only methods and data, but also “knowledge” for measuring impacts and dependencies. A delegation proposed specifying that methods, knowledge, and data inform decisions and actions “directly and in the value chain.”

On the combination of methods or metrics to assess biodiversity, a Member suggested specifying that these comprise both scientific methods and traditional knowledge. Other delegations preferred “Indigenous knowledge and local knowledge” and “Indigenous and local knowledge,” respectively.

A delegate proposed to specify that public disclosure of business impacts and dependencies can drive greater transparency, which others opposed.

Delegates then turned to **KM 6** on different method needs, approving the chapeau with a minor syntactical edit. In the body, one Member proposed mentioning “scenarios” in addition to methods and metrics, which the authors opposed, saying that scenarios were included under “methods.” Another delegation proposed to include a reference to site-specific information being required not only at the operations level but also at the level of value chains, which the authors said was not supported by the underlying chapter.

Several delegations sought clarification on the meaning of “participatory monitoring and mapping,” with the authors pointing to a definition provided in a table further down in the SPM. There were various requests to clarify the meaning of “top-down methods” and “bottom-up approaches.” Members eventually agreed to add footnotes with definitions to these terms.

On data and metrics representing local values, some Members proposed adding “knowledge, rights, and interests of other groups, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities.” Other delegations stressed they were not yet ready to endorse this edit and asked for the addition to remain bracketed.

At the proposal of several delegations, Members also agreed to reference “temporal” in addition to “spatial” resolution data as “an important area for future development of top-down approaches.”

Authors then introduced **KM 7**, highlighting that the message is about the three characteristics allowing businesses to assess methods as being fit for purpose: coverage, accuracy, and responsiveness.

Delegates and authors agreed to refer to “geographic scale” instead of geographic coverage. On methods needing to clearly link changes in biodiversity and nature’s contributions to people to specific interventions, one delegate proposed to also refer to ecosystems. Others disagreed, noting that biodiversity already includes ecosystems.

Authors introduced **KM 8**, emphasizing that engagement with Indigenous and local knowledge enriches businesses’ ability to deal with their impacts and dependencies on biodiversity. Delegates agreed to refer to Indigenous and local “methods and practices” in addition to knowledge.

The message’s body was subject to lengthy debate. In relation to the statement that Indigenous Peoples and local communities are not obliged to share their knowledge, several delegations supported specific reference to the principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC). While some suggested that FPIC applies also to local communities, one delegate opposed, citing distinct rights enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Another extensive discussion ensued in relation to proposals to add references to “access and benefit sharing” including from the “utilization of genetic resources and traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources.” Some delegates pointed out that the suggested edits are consistent with the Nagoya Protocol and previous IPBES’ assessments. The authors, however, pointed out that some of the suggestions go beyond the scope of this assessment. Concurring with the authors, several delegations proposed the deletion of the suggested edits, while one delegate suggested simplifying the sentence and just referencing Nagoya Protocol. Since no consensus was reached on either matter, WG 1 Co-Chair Eeva Primmer suggested bracketing the edits for the time being.

Authors introduced **KM 9**, highlighting its focus on gaps in knowledge and its application. Delegates agreed that the existing knowledge base “needs to” rather than “can” be further strengthened.

One delegate proposed adding a reference to a lack of comprehensive and comparable attribution of impacts across all sectors of businesses, as found in the underlying chapter.

A few delegates expressed concern about the “prescriptive tone” of a list of priority actions to address gaps. Lengthy discussions revolved around “requiring” businesses, including financial institutions, to disclose information on their activities. After considering suggestions from delegates, including regarding their preference to retain the word “disclosing,” authors suggested that this be reworded to “collecting and sharing comparable information, including through disclosure mechanisms.”

Authors then introduced **KM 10**, underscoring the importance of creating an enabling environment and the objective for the key messages to end on a positive note. Deliberations on this will continue on Friday, 6 February.

Co-Chair Primmer informed delegates that an informal huddle, facilitated by IPBES Chair Obura, would convene in the evening to address the remaining four issues that could not be resolved thus far, namely references to: climate and pollution, in addition to biodiversity; subsidies; human rights; and Indigenous and local knowledge and the Nagoya Protocol. She noted that a non-paper would be circulated to support this work.

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

**Additional elements of the rolling work programme of the Platform up to 2030:** WG 2 Co-Chair Sebastian König pointed to the report by the Bureau and Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) on the prioritization of requests, input, and suggestions for additional elements ([IPBES/12/9/Add.1](#)). Recalling the criteria for choosing assessment topics, MEP Co-Chair Shizuka Hashimoto noted that four topics were prioritized: pollution; poverty; cities; and climate change.

Co-Chair König noted that, ahead of IPBES 12, Members had raised questions regarding: the difficult financial situation of the Platform; need for realistic prioritization, sequencing, and workload management across objectives, including for small delegations; the importance of strengthening the uptake and impact of ongoing and completed assessments; the limited institutional and human capacity of the Platform, including the Bureau, MEP, and Secretariat; and forms of deliverables other than assessments.

IPBES Chair David Obura underscored the Bureau and MEP's recommendation not to agree on a new assessment at this Plenary. In terms of strategic considerations, he noted: that the Platform's financial situation has further deteriorated since IPBES 10; the need to consider the findings of the Platform's midterm review; and the opportunity to revise the terms of office of the current task forces and mandates of the technical support units for objectives 2, 3, and 4, which run only until IPBES 13. In terms of deliverables, he highlighted that fast-track assessments are half as expensive as standard ones. Noting that both are aimed at following-up on existing assessments, he also pointed to two formats that have not yet been used: synthesis reports, which are much shorter than assessments and have smaller author teams; and technical papers, which do not include a SPM and are not subject to Plenary approval.

Delegates supported the recommendation not to agree on a new assessment at IPBES 12. Several Members nevertheless emphasized pollution as a priority topic for future work. One country supported the topic of poverty and another suggested biodiversity and governance as a topic to consider. With regard to the timeline, two delegations cautioned that not having a deliverable at IPBES 14 may compromise IPBES' visibility.

Many delegations expressed interest in exploring other deliverable formats. Clarifying questions related to: the extent to which synthesis reports and technical papers could serve to update existing assessments; the process for nominating and selecting experts for these formats; how technical papers differ from factsheets. Two delegations suggested preparing a synthesis report aimed at supporting the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). One delegation suggested issuing a call for submissions to inform further reflection ahead of IPBES 13.

Noting the strong interest in addressing pollution, Chair Obura recalled the recent establishment of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste, and Pollution, and invited reflection on a tailored focus for work under IPBES. He also pointed to ongoing discussions on holding a workshop on biodiversity and climate change. He further suggested that the use of smaller deliverable formats may provide an opportunity to address several topics in parallel and that workshops may serve to speed up the preparation process.

The Secretariat noted that, as synthesis reports and technical papers use completed assessments, they can foster uptake of IPBES products. They also emphasized that costs for deliverables strongly depend on the number of meetings required, number of participants therein, and the possibility to work virtually. The Secretariat also highlighted that factsheets are considered communication tools, not formal deliverables.

Other Member comments related to, among others: the importance of scoping and the external review thereof; the impact

of deliverables that are not subject to government approval; and the fact that the expected impact of work on a given topic may inform decisions on format and budget allocation.

In the evening, Executive Secretary Luthando Dziba reported on discussions held in the Budget Contact Group. He shared that the Group in principle supports the proposed budgets for the coming years, noting that decisions adopted at IPBES 13 might imply a major revision should the Plenary decide to undertake a new deliverable.

Co-Chair König outlined a revised draft decision that sets up an intersessional process tasking the Bureau and MEP to develop a proposal regarding future deliverables across objectives, for consideration at IPBES 13. It also mandates: the Bureau and MEP to prepare scoping to enable IPBES 13 to consider mandating the preparation of one or more type of new deliverable; the Bureau and MEP to conduct a workshop with experts to inform this process; and making the proposal available for review by governments and experts before its finalization.

The Secretariat noted the understanding that Members expressed a desire for comprehensive scoping reports to be ready for IPBES 13 so as to swiftly launch work, should the Plenary agree on new deliverables. They also emphasized that the proposal will not only address potential reports, but also institutional arrangements for task forces and technical support units.

Comments related to: what the scoping would entail; considering synergies with other science-policy interfaces; ensuring specific consideration of options to strengthen the uptake of ongoing and completed assessments; taking into account the strong support expressed for addressing the issue of pollution; and considering institutional and capacity constraints.

One delegation suggested mandating a focused reflection on types of deliverable that could serve to address the prioritized topics, noting that initial scopings are already available for all four. The Co-Chairs recalled that thematic assessments require the preparation of full scopings, not only initial scopings, to be launched. They suggested leaving open what type of scoping the experts would prepare ahead of IPBES 13. Some delegates questioned which experts would participate in the workshop, considering the breadth of topics to be considered.

Pointing to budgetary constraints, one delegate questioned the need for a workshop and scoping to address all prioritized topics, considering the overwhelming support for the pollution issue. WG 2 Co-Chair Hesiquio Benítez Díaz recalled the proposed intersessional process is aimed at: supporting a reflection on how different formats could allow addressing more than one topic at reduced costs; and considering not only a potential report, but also institutional arrangements across objectives.

Discussions will continue on Friday, 6 February, to be informed by a Co-Chairs' proposal for a revised draft decision.

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

A huge clock towering above the dais in the plenary hall – the former Manchester Central railway station – reminded delegates in Working Group 1 that the time to finish the Summary for Policymakers of the Business and Biodiversity Assessment is ticking. Working Group Co-Chair Homer diligently measured the time needed to complete each key message, noting with delight that the time frames were getting shorter. At the end of the day, however, this outlook proved too optimistic, as delegates could not complete the review of all key messages.

In Working Group 2, delegates had an earnest discussion about potentially adding to the Platform's workload up to 2030. "Clearly, everyone is acutely aware of IPBES' human and budgetary constraints," noted a long-time observer, who remembered previous sessions in which Members were reluctant to budge from their ever-growing wish list of topics to prepare assessment reports on.

Not just the content, but also the format of future outputs featured prominently in the day's discussions. Delegates pondered different ways of "getting more bang for their buck." One participant explained the need to consider deliverables' expected impact, rather than costs alone, with a personal analogy: "I am willing to pay more for chocolate I am gifting my spouse on our anniversary than I would for chocolate to offer my boss."