

## IPBES 12 Highlights: Friday, 6 February 2026

Delegates elected a new Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP). Agreement was reached on a number of agenda items, including on indicators and an intersessional process for the Bureau and MEP to develop a proposal on the Platform's future work. Negotiations continued on the Business and Biodiversity Assessment, with delegates turning their attention to Background Messages.

### Plenary

**Stocktaking:** IPBES Chair David Obura opened the plenary, lauding progress made so far and enjoining delegates to make swift progress on the outstanding matters.

Working Group (WG) 1 Co-Chair Eeva Primmer reported productive deliberations in an informal huddle the night before and laid out plans to finish consideration of all key and Background Messages of the Business and Biodiversity Assessment's Summary for Policymakers (SPM) by the end of the day.

WG 2 Co-Chair Hesiquio Benítez Díaz presented progress on: building capacity, strengthening knowledge foundations, and supporting policy; improving the effectiveness of the Platform; and additional elements of the rolling work programme of the Platform up to 2030.

IPBES Chair Obura reported advanced discussions in the Budget Contact Group, noting work was in the final stages on: cash and in-kind contributions; expenditures for 2024; the budgets for 2026 and 2027; the provisional budget for 2028; and fundraising and the overall financial situation.

One Member lamented that an evening session of WG 1 on Wednesday had been held in English only, saying this ran counter to rules 37 and 39 of the Rules of Procedure and asking for this intervention to be recorded in the meeting report. During the evening session of Working Group 1, the Member raised the same point again, to which IPBES Chair Obura replied that the rules in question only apply to the plenary. The Member retorted that it would not agree to the establishment of working groups in the future if this was the case, and warned against establishing a precedent. Eventually, they agreed to continue discussions in English on an exceptional basis.

**Credentials:** Delegates heard a report from the Secretariat on the credentials of 99 Members participating in person and approved the report.

**Election of officers:** IPBES Chair Obura thanked the outgoing Chairs and members of the MEP and invited the regions to present their nominees for the next term of the MEP. Members elected the new regular and alternate MEP members by acclamation. They will serve for a three-year term starting at the closure of IPBES

12. Delegates also elected a new alternating Bureau member for the Western Europe and Others Group to serve until the end of the Bureau's regular term.

**Dates and venues of future sessions:** IPBES Chair Obura noted the Secretariat had not received any offers to host IPBES 13 and proposed that Members only decide on the session's dates at IPBES 12, inviting the Bureau to take a decision on the venue within the next six months. With regard to the relevant draft decision, one member emphasized the need for the Bureau to take into account other multilateral environmental processes more generally, rather than only of the relevant bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions, when considering the dates of future sessions.

### Working Group 1 – Business and Biodiversity Assessment

WG 1 Co-Chair Primmer invited delegates to consider the Summary for Policymaker's last Key Message (KM). Authors explained that **KM 10** is a summary of the previous messages, intended to underline the importance of creating an enabling environment and to end on a positive call to action.

One Member highlighted the importance of working with different scenarios. Another emphasized the need to provide financial incentives rather than just penalizing impacts.

On businesses facing pressure to focus on financial materiality by delivering short-term objectives and profitability, delegates debated at length whether to use "pressure" or "incentives," eventually agreeing on businesses being "motivated to" focus on financial materiality. One member questioned what was meant by "financial materiality," and the authors explained this term was widely used in a business context to refer to factors affecting entities' financial position.

On the creation of an enabling environment, a delegation suggested acknowledging "potentially transformative options" such as "bioeconomy, circular economy, degrowth, post-growth, inclusive wealth, and decoupling." Authors reject this, saying the message should stay at a higher level. The proposing Member agreed to consider these options in a Background Message.

On businesses and financial institutions being positive agents of change, one Member proposed, and all agreed, to add a reference to "addressing their impacts on biodiversity loss, climate change, and pollution, which are all interconnected."

Co-Chair Primmer then invited authors to present edits made in response to informal discussions on outstanding items, held the previous night.

Authors proposed, and Members agreed, to add a footnote in **KM 1** to specify that language on "nature's contributions to people," 14 of 18 categories of which show declines, comes from the first Global Assessment on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

On a proposed reference to human rights in KM 1, authors suggested to include this reference in a table and remove it from the text. The Member that had originally proposed this edit underlined the importance of mentioning human rights in the text as well and asked for the term to remain bracketed for the time being.

Authors stated their strong preference to retain the formulation “just and sustainable future” in the chapeau of **KM 2**, which was agreeable to Members.

In the body of KM 2, delegates discussed a suggested addition referring to the “interconnected crises of climate change and pollution” as a result of inadequate or perverse incentives creating barriers to halting and reversing biodiversity loss. Authors reported the understanding that “crises” should be replaced by “challenges,” which various Members rejected, noting the crisis language was used in other assessments as well. They eventually settled on “addressing the interconnection with climate change and pollution.”

Authors then presented a compromise text on a reference to subsidies in the body of KM 2, saying the text includes updated numbers from the [State of Finance for Nature](#) published by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) but does not go into detailed sectors, which would be reserved for the Background Message. Some Members requested deletion of a sentence underlining that these numbers highlight a major opportunity and need for repurposing capital to support biodiversity, which others said was the crucial takeaway of this paragraph. Delegates agreed on a proposal to “highlight both the need and opportunity to align financial flows to support biodiversity outcomes” in line with language from Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) Target 14.

On the appropriate level of businesses’ responsibility being a “societal decision,” referred to in the body of **KM 4**, authors introduced a footnote specifying what is meant by the term. While some expressed a preference to eliminate reference to “societal decision” entirely, Members reached agreement on a footnote that defined the term as “globally agreed goals and national contexts, including policy, laws, and regulations.”

The authors then introduced a replacement paragraph for the body of **KM 8**, to bring across clearly the message that better understanding of Indigenous Peoples and local communities as holders of knowledge could help businesses in their decision-making, with the paragraph also addressing implications for consent and access and benefit-sharing. Many delegates supported the authors’ proposal, while one delegation noted that it remains unclear to whom the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) applies. Delegates agreed to clarify that due diligence by businesses involves consent mechanisms, including FPIC of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, in accordance with national legislation.

Delegates disagreed about a suggestion to include reference to traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources, with some noting that Indigenous Peoples and local communities are holders of different types of knowledge. On a proposal to capitalize the term “local communities,” Co-Chair Primmer noted that “Indigenous Peoples and local communities” is standard IPBES language.

WG 2 Co-Chair Primmer opened the afternoon session by sharing that all tables and figures, except for Table SPM.1, have been agreed upon. She noted that a non-paper on Table SPM.1 would be circulated in the evening.

On the reference to human rights, a Member shared that delegations agreed during lunch break consultations to accept its inclusion in the KM, with a corresponding change in the

Background Messages, specifically A7. With this, delegates in WG 1 agreed on all the KMs.

Authors then introduced the three sections of the **Background Messages**: Section A on understanding the relationship between business and biodiversity; Section B on options for action by business, governments, financial institutions, and other actors; and Section C on measuring business impacts and dependencies on biodiversity and nature’s contribution to people.

Discussions started on **A1**. On the acceleration of loss in biodiversity and nature’s contributions to people, a few delegates noted that the change refers to the “modes” of production and consumption. Some delegates suggested referring to changes in “patterns” of production and consumption. The authors proposed to deemphasize economic growth as a cause of the acceleration. A Member asked if future demographics can be included in the message, which the authors said is not addressed in the underlying chapters.

On systemic failures to internalize nature’s values, referred to in **A2**, one Member questioned the meaning of “systemic” and proposed the term’s deletion, which others opposed.

On risks associated with biodiversity loss, a few delegates proposed adding pollution to the list. Another delegation sought clarity on the term “critical changes to earth systems.” Authors noted that the list was from the World Economic Forum 2025 Global Risks Report, and, as pollution is included in that report, the addition would be supported. They also agreed to include a footnote to explain the term “critical changes to earth systems.”

On the interaction of climate and biodiversity-related risks amplifying impacts, authors agreed that this refers to both economic and social impacts.

On the disproportionate impact on developing countries, one delegate, opposed by others, proposed changing “developing countries” to “low-income countries.” The suggestion to clarify that “limited capacity to absorb shocks” refers to both technical and financial capacity was supported by the authors.

Moving to **A3**, delegates disagreed on a paragraph about finance flows. Based on input received in informal discussions, the authors presented a compromise text using the same updated numbers as in KM 2, while differentiating between private finance and environmentally harmful public subsidies, as well as between different sectors. Some delegations requested deletion of sector-specific numbers, whereas others insisted those be retained, saying they had only agreed to their removal from KM 2 on the understanding that they would be included here. Some Members proposed listing individual sectors without including the respective amounts of environmentally harmful subsidies flowing to them. Noting outstanding disagreement, Co-Chair Homer said this item would be returned to at a later stage.

In the same paragraph, some Members questioned whether the statement that “trade-distorting subsidies have significant repercussions for developing countries” is supported by the underlying chapters of the Assessment, and proposed deleting this sentence. Others strongly opposed any possible deletion, noting this was one of the few mentions considering the special situation of developing countries. Some stressed that it was important to address the cross-border impacts of those subsidies, while others argued that this emphasis was not in line with the message of this paragraph.

Authors clarified that this statement referred to two separate sections of the Assessment: a reference to environmentally harmful subsidies having distorting effects on trade, contained in chapter 1, and another about the negative impacts of trade-distorting subsidies on “low income and poorly resourced

producers,” contained in chapter 6. A delegate suggested using the chapter’s specific term rather than “developing countries,” which others opposed. Similarly, a proposal to state that “harmful subsidies that distort trade” have significant repercussions on “all countries, in particular developing countries” did not gather support. Co-Chair Homer called on countries to seek a solution informally.

On some business actions to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity being profitable, Members agreed to add, as examples, “modes of sustainable production and consumption, including reducing waste and circular economy approaches.”

On the business dependencies resulting from non-material contributions, discussed in **A4**, one delegation proposed also referring to aesthetic values, which the authors confirmed is supported by the underlying chapter.

On navigating complex trade-offs and considering broader societal needs, one delegation pointed out that the executive summary of the corresponding chapter states that businesses “must” do so. Authors noted that the word was avoided as this can be considered prescriptive, and delegates agreed to state that business “have to” do so.

The proposal to add “women and girls” to those who may have limited capacity to absorb or adapt to negative impacts was accepted.

In the evening, the Group turned to **A5**. Delegates agreed to add “water” as an example of readily available input. On businesses’ dependency on Indigenous and local knowledge, one delegate proposed specifying the kind of knowledge referred to in this sentence. The authors, however, reiterated that Members have previously agreed to simply use “knowledge” as it refers to both traditional and current knowledge.

In the body of **A6**, Members agreed to delete reference to “ecological connectivity” from an elaboration of “all dimensions of biodiversity.” A delegate proposed specifying that business’s impacts vary according to sector, in addition to location, which was agreed.

On business impacts being assessed using biodiversity measures, WG 1 accepted a Member’s proposal to refer to “metrics” instead of measures. Several delegations suggested adding specific metrics to the ones already listed, which the authors opposed.

To reflect the agreed language of KM 1, delegates agreed to include, in **A7**, that there is growing recognition that businesses should integrate social and human rights considerations when assessing their impacts on nature.

On Indigenous lands and territories threatened by industrial development, one delegate questioned whether the percentage cited in the message is correct. The authors assured that the statement is based on their assessment, but agreed to qualify it as “approximately” 60 percent and “nearly” one-quarter, since there are only a few studies on this topic. One Member, opposed by others, proposed deleting the reference to Indigenous lands and territories, because it may imply that the threats exclude local lands. Authors agreed to add another sentence which states that the same issues affect local communities.

On **A8**, delegations proposed several changes, including suggestions to refer to: transformative options such as bioeconomy, circular economy, degrowth, postgrowth, inclusive wealth, and decoupling; and the opening of new business opportunities to meet the demand for monitoring and reporting. A lengthy discussion ensued to safeguard the authors’ original intention and the text’s legibility. The revised text was eventually left in brackets.

Discussions continued well into the night, turning to Section B.

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

**Building capacity, strengthening knowledge foundations, and supporting policy:** WG 2 Co-Chair Benítez Díaz opened discussions on indicators for measuring the effectiveness of the implementation of the workplans for objectives 2, 3, and 4 of the rolling work programme, which will inform the relevant groups’ reporting to IPBES 13. Delegates agreed to the proposed indicators.

Turning to the draft decision, the Secretariat delineated the suggestion for the Bureau and MEP to develop a holistic indicator framework to monitor implementation of the IPBES work programme, including performance and impact indicators, for consideration by IPBES 13. The review panel highlighted its support, noting such a framework will be a useful basis for future IPBES reviews. Delegates agreed to the proposal.

Delegates also agreed to the rest of the draft decision.

**Additional elements of the rolling work programme of the Platform up to 2030:** WG 2 Co-Chair Sebastian König presented a revised draft decision. Some delegations questioned which experts would be invited to participate in the workshop aimed at supporting the development, by the Bureau and MEP, of a proposal on future work. The Secretariat suggested these be Co-Chairs and authors of past assessments, but also other relevant experts, noting the workshop would take place in the second half of 2026. Pointing to a recommendation by the IPBES review panel, one delegation suggested adding a specific mandate for the Bureau and the MEP to review the experience gained in conducting fast-track assessments to inform the proposal’s development, which delegates supported. Some delegates sought assurances that discussions held at IPBES 12, including topic preferences, would feed into the proposal’s development.

Delegates agreed to the draft decision, with Co-Chair König noting that any potential impacts from the budget negotiations on this matter would be addressed during the closing plenary on Sunday, 8 February. With this, WG 2 concluded its mandate.

### **In The Corridors**

Like the British weather, the fourth day of IPBES 12 proved to be highly volatile. It started on a sunny note with the smooth election of a new Multidisciplinary Expert Panel during a stocktaking plenary that also highlighted the advanced stage of discussions across agenda items.

Notwithstanding thorny disagreements, Members managed to agree on all ten key messages of the upcoming Business and Biodiversity Assessment’s Summary for Policymakers (SPM) after lunch. Working Group 2, too, had a celebratory moment as it reached agreement on all matters it was tasked to consider. A longstanding expert dared to share their “relief” – prematurely, as it turned out.

Afternoon discussions in Working Group 1 on the SPM’s background messages quickly took a stormy turn, with protracted gridlock over references to harmful subsidies. Diagnosing a growing politicization of the debate, one observer expressed fears of the “IPCC-ification of IPBES,” in reference to the often-heated nature of negotiations in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Some forecasters were already looking toward IPBES 13. A weathered delegate recalled that it has been ten years since the IPBES Plenary last convened in Asia. As he headed into the rainy night, he expressed hope that a country steps forward in the next six months. If not, the session will again take place in Bonn, which “alas, is not much sunnier than Manchester.”

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