



IPBES-1 HIGHLIGHTS

MONDAY, 21 JANUARY 2013

The first session of the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES-1) opened on Monday, 21 January 2013, in Bonn, Germany. Delegates heard opening statements, elected Bureau members and discussed rules of procedure for meetings of the Plenary, policy and procedures for the admission of observers, and the initial IPBES work programme.

OPENING SESSION

Nick Nuttall, UNEP, welcomed participants to the meeting.

Ursula Heinen-Esser, German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, thanked participants for supporting the decision to locate the IPBES Secretariat in Bonn. She called on the meeting to take the decisions necessary to have IPBES start its work as soon as possible. She announced that the German government would support IPBES with 1 million euros per year and the establishment of an IPBES coordination office.

Jürgen Nimptsch, Mayor of Bonn, welcomed IPBES to Bonn as the newest member of the Bonn-based UN family.

Achim Steiner, Executive Director, UNEP, thanked the German government and organizations involved in setting up IPBES. He highlighted support for IPBES from the 65th session of the UN General Assembly and the UN Conference on Sustainable Development 'Rio+20' in 2012, calling for moving beyond the design elements to action. He then opened the meeting.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

STATUS OF THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE PLATFORM:

Achim Steiner reported that 105 states are currently members of IPBES.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

Delegates elected the following members to the Bureau of the Plenary: Alfred Apau Oteng-Yeboah (Ghana) as Vice Chair, Fundisile Goodman Mketeni (South Africa) as other Bureau member, and Ali Daud Mohamed (Kenya) as alternate, for the African Group; Zakri Abdul Hamid (Malaysia) as Chair, Yoo Yeon Chul (Republic of Korea) as other Bureau member for the first half of term and alternate for the second half of term, Jay Ram Adhirkari (Nepal) as other Bureau member for the second half of term and as alternate during the first half of term, and Asghar Mohammadi Fazel (Iran) as alternate Vice Chair, for Asia-Pacific; Leonel Sierralta Jara (Chile) as Vice Chair for the first half of term and other Bureau member during the second half of term, Spencer Thomas (Grenada) as Vice Chair for the second half of term and other Bureau member for the first half of term, Adalberto

Luis Val (Brazil) as alternate Vice Chair for the first half of term and alternate other Bureau member during the second half of term and Lilian Ferrufino (Honduras) as alternate other Bureau member for the first half of term and alternate Vice Chair for the second half of term, for the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC); Robert Watson (UK) as Chair and Ivar Andreas Baste (Norway) as other Bureau member for Western Europe and Other States, noting that this group is consulting on alternates; and Sergey Trepelkov (Russian Federation) as Vice Chair for the first half of term, Senka Barudanović (Bosnia and Herzegovina) as Vice Chair for the second half of term, Adem Bilgin (Turkey) as other Bureau member for the first half of term, and Ioseb Kartisivadze (Georgia) for the second half of term, for Eastern Europe.

Achim Steiner announced that Alfred Apau Oteng-Yeboah (Ghana) would act as Chair of the meeting, and Leonel Sierralta Jara (Chile) as rapporteur, in anticipation of the final composition of the Bureau.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK: Delegates adopted the meeting's agenda (IPBES/1/1 and Add.1) and organization of work (IPBES/1/INF/1).

CREDENTIALS

Chair Oteng-Yeboah announced that the Bureau will examine the credentials of representatives and will submit a report to the Plenary.

RULES AND PROCEDURES

RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR MEETINGS OF THE PLENARY: Neville Ash, UNEP, introduced the relevant documents (IPBES.MI/2/9, Annex I, Appendix II; IPBES/1/3; and IPBES/1/INF/2/Rev.2, INF/3, INF/4, INF/5 and INF/6), explaining that the bracketed texts in IPBES/1/3 are the compiled comments received during the intersessional process.

The US, SWITZERLAND, ARGENTINA, THAILAND, CHINA, JAPAN, FIJI, the INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE (ICSU) and a representative of INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES stressed the important role of observer participation in the work of IPBES. The US hoped that the issue of the membership of the EU could be resolved. Supported by PERU and VENEZUELA, BRAZIL proposed that the terms of office of the Bureau and Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) be two years.

BRAZIL, MALAYSIA, BOLIVIA, ARGENTINA, CHINA, TURKEY and the REPUBLIC OF KOREA supported decision-making through consensus. BOLIVIA highlighted the importance of a non-commercial view of and decentralized approach to biodiversity, and supported a decentralized structure for the MEP.



CHINA, supported by JAPAN, PERU, MALAYSIA, THAILAND and Benin for the AFRICA GROUP, felt that the MEP should operate independently of the Bureau. CHINA called for equal representation of developing and developed countries within the MEP. Ireland, on behalf the EU's IPBES members, and supported by THAILAND and the REPUBLIC OF KOREA, called for full and active membership of regional economic integration organizations (REIOs). The EUROPEAN COMMISSION noted that full membership of REIOs will bring experience and resources to IPBES. VENEZUELA opposed, arguing that some states would have double representation.

HONDURAS stressed the importance of a participatory approach to the work of IPBES. NIGERIA, GUATEMALA and a representative of INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES highlighted the need to ensure the involvement of indigenous and local communities. COLOMBIA urged the development of protocols that promote FPIC of indigenous peoples and local communities and respectful treatment of acquired data.

PALESTINE called for support to facilitate its membership in IPBES. The UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) reported that its Ad Hoc Working Group on Scientific Advice would present a report on desertification, land degradation and drought issues at its COP11. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), speaking for the biodiversity-related conventions, said partnership with IPBES would support common objectives for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and enhance the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), speaking on behalf of the STAKEHOLDER GROUP that met just prior to IPBES-1, and supported by ICSU, called for IPBES to consider a strategy on stakeholder participation. A BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY representative expressed the hope that IPBES would regard the business community as a resource and partner.

Chair Oteng-Yeboah announced that this agenda item would be further discussed.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR THE ADMISSION OF OBSERVERS: Chair Oteng-Yeboah introduced the agenda item (IPBES/1/4). NORWAY expressed the need to ensure open and easy access for observers. ICSU stated observers should feel welcome to contribute and be supported to do so. The CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES (CITES) referred to existing text regarding observers to UN bodies. Chair Oteng-Yeboah suggested establishing a contact group to discuss the matter. COLOMBIA, in reference to bracketed text in document IPBES/1/4, and, supported by GUATEMALA, MEXICO and ECUADOR, suggested the inclusion of various observer groups simultaneously, including intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and indigenous peoples and local communities. ARGENTINA, supported by BRAZIL, CHINA, MEXICO and ECUADOR, but opposed by NORWAY and SWITZERLAND, felt that text changes should be addressed by the Plenary rather than by a contact group.

ARGENTINA stressed that the issues relating to decision-making by consensus, including on the admission of observers, had already been agreed upon in the Busan Outcomes and at the Second Session of the Plenary Meeting on IPBES in Panama. She also cautioned against undermining procedural issues in the haste to tackle substantive matters. Chair Oteng-Yeboah deferred the discussion until a later time.

INITIAL WORK PROGRAMME OF THE PLATFORM

Neville Ash (UNEP) introduced the related documents (IPBES/1/2 and 5, IPBES/1/INF/8, INF/9, INF/10 and INF/14, and the Catalogue of Assessments on the IPBES website).

NEXT STEPS REQUIRED FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE INITIAL WORK PROGRAMME: MEXICO highlighted the need for holders of indigenous knowledge to have free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) when this knowledge is used, and stressed the importance of finding the balance between the four functions of IPBES. Supported by Ireland on behalf of the EU's IPBES members, MEXICO subscribed to the key messages of the informal expert workshop (IPBES/INF.9) on main issues relating to the development of a conceptual framework.

THAILAND highlighted that the work of IPBES should be demand-driven. Ireland, for the EU's IPBES members, expressed continued support for a bottom-up approach to assessments and a common conceptual framework. He supported an additional expert and stakeholder meeting be held to further develop the conceptual framework and suggested a task force or other structure be established to further develop the work on capacity building. He also noted the reference to the role of and collaboration with IPBES in decisions CBD/COP/XI/2 and 3.

JAPAN stressed the need to clarify the roles of the Bureau and the MEP, and called for scoping exercises. He announced that his country would be willing to host a workshop in this regard. Supported by GUATEMALA, JAPAN also stated the need to develop synergies between scientific and indigenous knowledge, so long as indigenous rights are respected, and stressed the need for regional scientific assessments and internal capacity building. NORWAY, supported by the US and GUATEMALA, felt that the establishment of IPBES's first work programme should be prioritized. NORWAY also suggested developing a biodiversity assessment for use within the CBD context.

BOLIVIA emphasized that the conceptual framework for IPBES should include cultural, spiritual and political elements, and respect human rights as well as the rights of Mother Earth. He further cautioned against the commercialization of biodiversity. BRAZIL urged that capacity building be included in the list of possible key programme deliverables and outputs.

PROCEDURE FOR RECEIVING AND PRIORITIZING REQUESTS PUT TO THE PLATFORM: JAPAN underlined the need for IPBES to respond to requests with consistency, with MEXICO and SOUTH AFRICA supporting a standard format in this context. Ireland, for the EU's IPBES members, supported by the US, SOUTH AFRICA, BRAZIL and CHINA, highlighted the need to clarify the roles of the Bureau, MEP and/or Plenary, with SWITZERLAND underlining the scientific independence of the MEP.

THAILAND emphasized the importance of requests from international organizations or bodies, while CHINA favored prioritizing governmental requests. COLOMBIA warned that requests should not inhibit other IPBES work. Noting the importance of transparency, IUCN suggested that future requests include information on how they have originated.

Chair Oteng-Yeboah announced that he would suggest next steps for this agenda item at a later stage.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As participants arrived in scenic, snow-covered Bonn, they were eager and excited to be part of the first Plenary of IPBES. On the opening day, however, congratulations and celebrations slowly made room for doubts on whether the meeting would evolve from discussing procedural issues to making substantive progress, with one participant expressing hope that "IPBES would work in the spirit of moving forward". Some expressed their frustration with the slow pace of the discussion on organizational matters, but others stressed the fundamental importance to IPBES of issues such as the independence of the MEP and the role of observers.