



IPBES-1 HIGHLIGHTS FRIDAY, 25 JANUARY 2013

On Friday, IPBES-1 met in a morning plenary session to address the election of officers of the Bureau, institutional arrangements and financial and budgetary arrangements. The plenary also elected the 25 members of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP). In the afternoon and into the late evening, the plenary continued deliberating the election of the IPBES chair, but no agreement was reached.

The contact groups on the rules of procedure and on the initial work programme met in the afternoon and evening, with the latter group finalizing its work. The open-ended informal group on an initial budget for IPBES and the Friends of the Chair group on institutional arrangements also met during the day.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

FRANCE highlighted the historic nature of the day, since on this exact date in 2005, the then French President Jacques Chirac called for the creation of an intergovernmental network of biodiversity scientists at the international conference “Biodiversity: Science and Governance” held in Paris, France.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS OF THE BUREAU OF THE PLENARY: The plenary elected the two alternate members of the Bureau for Western Europe and Other States: Idunn Eidheim (Norway) and Gilles Boeuf (France).

Addressing the election of the chair of IPBES, Session Chair Alfred Apau Oteng-Yeboah (Ghana) presented the outcome of the Bureau’s consultations with members and regional groups, and proposed a rotation system for the two nominated candidates, with Zakri Abdul Hamid (Malaysia) serving as chair first, and Robert Watson (UK) taking over in the second half of the Bureau’s term.

Liberia, for the AFRICAN GROUP, and Mexico, for GRULAC, expressed dissatisfaction with a rotation system. Azerbaijan, for EASTERN EUROPE, and Denmark, for WESTERN EUROPE AND OTHER STATES, supported the proposal. Nepal, for ASIA-PACIFIC, called for more time to consider the proposal. Chair Oteng-Yeboah expressed hope that the meeting would reach consensus in order to avoid a vote, and reminded the plenary that a chair should be elected by the end of the day.

Plenary revisited the issue in the afternoon, but no progress was made. Mexico, for GRULAC, asked for more time. Chair Oteng-Yeboah announced the agenda item would be discussed by plenary again in the evening, allowing time for consultations between the representatives of the UN regions.

In the evening session, Mexico, for GRULAC, reported that the group still preferred one IPBES chair for the entire term of office. Noting this position, Chair Oteng-Yeboah concluded that there was no consensus on the alternatives discussed earlier, namely two co-chairs or a rotating system. Mexico, on behalf of GRULAC, supported by CHINA, proposed one more round of consultations among the regional groups in a final attempt to avoid a vote. Chair Oteng-Yeboah asked Hesiquio Benitez Diaz (Mexico) to facilitate the group. Two hours later, Diaz informed the plenary that the group had made progress, but needed more time. Chair Oteng-Yeboah asked the group to continue its work and report to him by the end of the day, and closed the plenary.

INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

In the morning, Luthando Dziba (South Africa), chair of the Friends of the Chair group on institutional arrangements, reported to the plenary that the group had decided to merge the draft decision on the IPBES Secretariat (IPBES/1/CRP.4) with the draft conclusion on the link between IPBES and the UN system (IPBES/1/CRP.5), resulting in a draft decision on “administrative and institutional arrangements.” He said the document now contains three separate sections: on administrative arrangements, the trust fund, and institutional arrangements.

In the afternoon, Dziba provided the plenary with an update, stating the group would address the issue of the structure of the Secretariat in consultation with the informal open-ended group on the budget. In the evening plenary, Dziba reported that the group had made progress during the day, and had suggested that the plenary endorse UNEP to administer the funds for IPBES until a final choice is made between UNEP and UNDP with regard to the administration of the trust fund.

Chair Oteng-Yeboah announced that the Bureau would advise plenary on Saturday on how to move forward on these issues, and thanked the group for its work.

FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY ARRANGEMENTS

INITIAL BUDGET OF THE PLATFORM: In the morning, Spencer Thomas (Grenada), chair of the informal open-ended group on an initial IPBES budget, informed the plenary that the group had addressed contributions, meetings in 2013 and staffing, concluding that more information was needed and pledges for contributions for 2013 were welcome.

CHINA, FRANCE, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA, JAPAN, NORWAY, the US, FINLAND, the UK, CANADA, SWEDEN, SOUTH AFRICA, NEW ZEALAND and CHILE made pledges, with the EU stating it had contributed to IPBES in the past, and would like to contribute again once it becomes a member of the Platform.



In the evening plenary, Chair Oteng-Yeboah announced that the informal open-ended group on the budget would be transformed into a contact group, to continue its discussions on Saturday.

NOMINATION AND SELECTION OF MEMBERS OF THE MEP

In the morning plenary, the five UN regions presented their final MEP nominees, and all 25 were subsequently elected (see <http://www.ipbes.net/plenary/current-mep-members.html>).

Malaysia, for ASIA PACIFIC, explained that the region had decided on a system of alternation, with three MEP members changing after the first year of the initial two-year period. NORWAY voiced disappointment with the underrepresentation of women and social scientists on the MEP, expressing hope that this election process would provide lessons for the future. CANADA, supported by GRENADA, suggested involving the nominees who had not been elected in the work of IPBES.

RULES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE OPERATIONS OF THE PLENARY

RULES OF PROCEDURE: In the morning, Robert Watson (UK), co-chair of the contact group on rules of procedure, informed the plenary that the contact group was prioritizing decisions necessary for IPBES to function during the intersessional period and IPBES-2, and that even though progress had been made on several issues, discussion continued on whether consensus is necessary regarding the admission of observers. He flagged that this could have implications for IPBES-2.

In the morning and afternoon, the contact group discussed draft policy and procedures for the admission of observers (IPBES/1/4). Delegates agreed to procedures on admitting states that are not a member to IPBES. Agreement was not reached on admission procedures for observers granted provisional observer status by the Bureau, but facing potential rejection by the plenary. In this context, some delegates preferred plenary consensus, and others a voting procedure if possible rejection should arise. No consensus was reached in the morning or afternoon sessions. Delegates discussed how this outcome could influence observer admission at upcoming IPBES meetings, with Co-Chair Leonel Sierralta Jara (Chile) noting that as IPBES grows, more observers would apply. Several parties suggested that the plenary decide to move this issue forward to IPBES-2. Co-Chair Watson suggested, and delegates agreed, to request the UNEP legal advisor to examine the language used in Panama with regards to admittance of observers and consult on this issue with the UN Office of Legal Affairs in New York, US.

On the rules of procedure for meetings of the plenary (IPBES/1/3), delegates discussed the procedures for revising and amending the agenda. They agreed that members should receive the agenda in advance, and send possible revisions to the Secretariat. Addressing decision-making processes, reference was made to IPCC text on the acceptance, adaptation and approval of documents. With regard to MEP nominees, delegates discussed that it is IPBES members who put forward their nominations, in consultation with observer organizations as they see fit. Delegates also discussed the need to balance flexibility and guidance, for instance by allowing the MEP to develop its own regional structure, while providing criteria to encourage gender balance and a focus on multidisciplinary.

In the afternoon, Co-Chair Watson reported on these discussions to the plenary. CHINA reflected on the contact group's lack of consensus on the admission of observers, suggesting an interim arrangement for IPBES-2 in order to accommodate new observers. Session Chair Oteng-Yeboah announced that the Bureau would reflect on this proposal.

INITIAL WORK PROGRAMME OF IPBES

Zakri Abdul Hamid (Malaysia), co-chair of the contact group on the initial work programme, reported to the plenary in the morning, stating the group had made "tremendous progress" on many issues, including the conceptual framework and knowledge systems.

The group resumed its work in the morning. On the scoping process, delegates discussed whether the MEP should consult with the Bureau on the draft scoping process that it is to prepare in the intersessional period, before making recommendations to IPBES-2. After some debate, delegates agreed that this would not be necessary, leaving the matter up to the discretion of the chair of the MEP. They also agreed that the MEP's draft document on the scoping process, as well as its draft document on procedures relating to reports and deliverables, would be forwarded to IPBES-2 for "consideration," rather than "adoption."

In the afternoon, addressing the potential future regional structure and composition of the MEP, delegates agreed to include new text requesting the Secretariat to acknowledge nominees to the interim MEP for their candidature, and requesting the Bureau and the Secretariat to include these nominees on an expert roster to ensure their expertise is available for the future work of IPBES.

Delegates also agreed to request the Bureau to review the administrative procedure used in the selection of the interim MEP, to ensure effective consultation and balance, and request the current MEP to provide information on expertise that would be required for a future MEP.

On the work programme for 2014-2018, delegates agreed on text that requests the Bureau to work with the MEP to draft the work programme with sequenced and prioritized objectives, deliverables, actions and milestones for advancing the four functions of IPBES. They debated on whether to take special consideration of requests from MEAs and settled on "giving consideration to those by biodiversity-related MEAs."

Addressing the procedure for receiving and prioritizing requests put to the Platform, delegates discussed information requests submitted prior to IPBES-1. They agreed to request the Secretariat to contact the submitters of incomplete requests, asking them to provide additional information.

In the afternoon, Co-Chair Zakri informed the plenary that the contact group had finalized its work.

IN THE CORRIDORS

On Friday, despite persisting uncertainty about the Platform's chairmanship, delegates celebrated the election of the MEP members after a week of regional consultation and compromise. Responses in the corridors and in the social media highlighted the underrepresentation of women and social scientists in the MEP. However, the contact group on the initial work programme took the opportunity to wordsmith: delegates added text to ensure that the future regional structure and composition of the MEP will be a result of thorough regional consultations and a true balance between natural and social sciences.

In the meantime, stakeholders felt let down by IPBES. Some said that whereas the platform seemed to acknowledge their potential valuable input, their participation was underemphasized at this meeting. One representative noted that their hope lies with the stakeholder engagement strategy. On the other hand, the inability to resolve the issue of the admission of observers left some wondering whether "observers should go on strike."

ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS: The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of IPBES-1 will be available on Tuesday, 29 January 2013, online at: <http://www.iisd.ca/ipbes/ipbes1/>