



IPBES Bulletin

A Daily Report of the Second *Ad Hoc* Intergovernmental and Multi-stakeholder Meeting on an Intergovernmental Science-Policy Interface on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES II)
Published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)

ONLINE AT [HTTP://WWW.IISD.CA/YIMB/BIODIV/IPBES2/](http://www.iisd.ca/yimb/biodiv/ipbes2/)
ISSUE #3, VOLUME 158, No. 4, THURSDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2009



IPBES II HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 7 OCTOBER 2009

The second *ad hoc* intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting on an IPBES continued plenary discussions on Wednesday. Chair Watson presented on the IPCC followed by an address by Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director. The Secretariat distributed “draft outcomes of discussions on 5 and 6 October 2009” for consideration.

FUNCTIONS OF AN IPBES

Chair Watson, opening the morning’s session, stated that discussions would be more specific and focus on the functions of an IPBES. He asked delegates to discuss which existing institutions and platforms need strengthening and look at the costs of available options and evaluate what would be the most efficient mechanism to strengthen the science-policy interface. He also noted three categories for discussions, specifically: knowledge generation; knowledge assessments; and capacity building. Chair Watson called for delegates to focus discussions at national and international levels, and acknowledge the social and economic dimensions of the knowledge base.

Brazil, for GRULAC, asked for a presentation on the functioning and governance structure of the IPCC. Turkey requested that this presentation include financing structures and country contributions. China cautioned against focusing solely on the creation of an IPBES, as it is not the only option available for strengthening the science-policy interface. New Zealand expressed its support for any initiative that allows evidence-based findings.

KNOWLEDGE GENERATION: The EU, Switzerland and others said a new mechanism should help improve collaboration between existing bodies and provide assessments on biodiversity and ecosystem services trends, but it shouldn’t generate new primary scientific data. Japan said the basic function of an IPBES should be to synthesize and organize existing knowledge, not create new information or conduct new research activities. Brazil added that an IPBES should provide additional information as requested by the COPs of biodiversity-related conventions, particularly the CBD. DIVERSITAS highlighted three components needed for a successful science-policy interface: research, observations and assessments. She called for momentum to strengthen efforts to collect and share data, while making it relevant. Tour de Valat said an important function of an IPBES should be to assess the usefulness of knowledge and information. Canada added that an IPBES could identify priorities and knowledge gaps.

Malaysia noted a knowledge deficit in many developing countries and stressed the need to strengthen research and monitoring, while Uganda called for supporting a long-term knowledge base at the national and sub-regional level in addition to assisting developing countries in strengthening capacity in data collection, storage and analysis. Iran re-emphasized the need for a free and open access to data information and an information depository. Ethiopia added that capacity building is essential for research and assessment. The US reiterated that it is best to include capacity building as part of ongoing research and scientific activities.

Cameroon said any new mechanism should help increase access to capacity building, training needs and finances, especially to developing countries. Chair Watson said an IPBES could be a platform for identifying needs across the biodiversity spectrum, and bridging the disconnect between policy-makers, knowledge generators and funding agencies.

KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENTS AND CAPACITY BUILDING: Launching discussions on the potential role for an IPBES in knowledge assessments, Chair Watson said it could help catalyze locally-driven assessments, diversify the knowledge base and build local capacity. IUCN, supported by Egypt, Mexico, EU, Senegal, Malaysia and others, highlighted the role of an IPBES in creating a common knowledge platform. He outlined a range of core functions the body could serve, including technical support for local and regional assessments; supporting peer reviews across regions; synthesizing outcomes at the thematic level; and disseminating policy-relevant information. The EU and Malaysia noted that to strengthen the scientific base and serve as a source of authoritative consensus, the proposed mechanism should not be tied to a specific convention, process or UN body. Uganda emphasized the importance of sub-regional assessments in Africa, and with Senegal and others, called for predictable and regular assessments. Japan called for a focused approach to manage diverse demands.

Brazil, for GRULAC, noted that a new mechanism should have capacity building and assessments as pillars. Brazil also stressed the role of traditional knowledge as one of the tools to empower countries to sustainably conserve biodiversity. United Nations University (UNU) highlighted the role of the sub-global assessments in assisting an IPBES. Israel supported an IPBES assessment with a very wide range of clients and not just the CBD. South Africa noted that a new mechanism should provide tools and methodologies to turn assessment findings into action. Peru emphasized that a new mechanism should

The *IPBES Bulletin* is a publication of the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) <info@iisd.ca>, publishers of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* <enb@iisd.org>. This issue was written and edited by Kate Louw, Wangu Mwangi, Tanya Rosen, and Mark Schulman. The Digital Editor is Tallash Kantai. The Editor is Leonie Gordon <leonie@iisd.org>. The Director of IISD Reporting Services is Langston James “Kimo” Goree VI <kimo@iisd.org>. Funding for coverage of this meeting has been provided by the UNEP Division of Environmental Policy Implementation. IISD can be contacted at 161 Portage Avenue East, 6th Floor, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 0Y4, Canada; tel: +1-204-958-7700; fax: +1-204-958-7710. The opinions expressed in the *Bulletin* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD. Excerpts from the *Bulletin* may be used in other publications with appropriate academic citation. Electronic versions of the *Bulletin* are sent to e-mail distribution lists (in HTML and PDF formats) and can be found on the Linkages WWW-server at <<http://www.iisd.ca/>>. For information on the *Bulletin*, including requests to provide reporting services, contact the Director of IISD Reporting Services at <kimo@iisd.org>, +1-646-536-7556 or 300 East 56th St., 11A, New York, New York 10022, United States of America. The IISD Team at IPBES II can be contacted by e-mail at <tanya@iisd.org>.

also provide social and economic information. Iran noted that participation by developing countries in the new mechanism “should be real.” The US underscored that environmental impact assessments need to include baseline information, such as species and ecosystems, and be incorporated in broader country databases. FAO noted the relevance of its assessments to an IPBES.

Chair Watson noted that delegates expressed preference for a new mechanism that is: demand driven, multidisciplinary, regular and timely; inclusive of local and international experts; intergovernmental; and able to harness local and traditional knowledge and meet the needs of multiple conventions, with not just UNEP involved. He stressed that such a mechanism should reflect social, economic and cultural aspects and build on existing assessments. Chair Watson emphasized that a new mechanism would have a common methodology and conceptual framework, and assist at the national, sub-national, sub-regional and transboundary levels. He then called for delegates to focus on whether a set of tools is available that can be developed for better knowledge use. He stated that a possible role for an IPBES could be to identify a range of tools, and catalyze the generation of these tools.

Ramsar stressed that biodiversity-related conventions’ scientific bodies could be useful in this area, noting that the credibility and authority of the advice provided would be strengthened by assessments.

The US emphasized the need to disseminate best practices for the sharing and generation of assessments and biodiversity conservation. Sierra Leone highlighted the use of strategic environmental assessments to mainstream biodiversity and ecosystem services into policy. Egypt called for an IPBES to assist in capacity building of community-based natural resource management. Japan stressed that information should be user-friendly and not policy prescriptive. Malaysia highlighted the need for civil society and non-governmental organizations’ involvement in identifying, generating and using tools.

In summary, Chair Watson noted the discussion focused on identifying needs, the role of an IPBES in catalyzing the generation of tools, the need to support global assessments being developed, and identifying other possible tools for aiding global assessments.

CHAIR’S IPCC PRESENTATION: Responding to a request from Brazil, Chair Watson presented an overview of the IPCC. He said that through an elected plenary, secretariat, working groups and a voluntary trust fund, the IPCC is independent of the UNFCCC and its subsidiary bodies, such as SBSTTA, but there is strong dialogue between them. Chair Watson suggested that an IPBES would be different from the IPCC model, but that delegates could draw on the success of this intergovernmental process.

Brazil said that the IPCC is a good basis to think about the possibility of establishing an IPBES, and reiterated that the new mechanism should not generate knowledge but catalyze it. He also stressed the importance of peer-review and review by governments in the process. Mexico observed that the IPCC model is an interesting reference point but that

an IPBES is more complex, especially, as noted by the Chair, there are numerous biodiversity-related conventions involved. Responding to a question about a funding mechanism for an IPBES, Chair Watson said that it is important to first define the functions, principles and procedures, and “get the process right.”

ADDRESS BY UNEP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director, addressed the plenary. Although noting the continuing rate of biodiversity loss and failure to meet the internationally agreed target to reduce significantly the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010, he said the knowledge for biodiversity is far richer today than for climate change 20 years ago, and that this enormous amount of available science needs to be channeled to empower decision makers. Scientific objectivity and independence as a driver for international consensus is required, he added, and developing an IPBES could help satisfy the science-policy interface.

CAPACITY BUILDING: On the possible role of an IPBES in capacity building, Chair Watson invited delegates to comment on a proposal tabled by GRULAC. Introducing the GRULAC proposal, Brazil noted it sets out three capacity-building objectives for an IPBES, and two broad groups of measures to achieve these: 1) measures relating to enhancing access to biodiversity and ecosystem service information, and 2) measures relating to enhancing training programmes and opportunities for scientists in developing countries. The Chair noted that the proposal received broad support from many delegates, with most stressing that an IPBES should serve as a catalyst and not duplicate existing capacity-building activities. The EU stressed that a key role of an IPBES should be to facilitate participation of scientists from all regions on an equal footing. Senegal highlighted support for interdisciplinary studies, and with Malawi, Uganda, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire and South Africa, underscored the need for support in translating studies into policy-relevant information. Switzerland highlighted the need to proceed gradually, building on the most immediate priorities. Norway added that the measures listed in the GRULAC proposal would facilitate a mapping of existing initiatives in order to identify “which holes we need to fill”. The US drew attention to existing initiatives that are addressing issues of information access. Iran highlighted an IPBES’ role in identifying best technologies and practices, and introducing them to countries that need them. Brazil noted that access to international publications empowers scientists in developing countries.

Summarizing the session, Chair Watson referenced the GRULAC proposal and emphasized the catalytic and implementation nature of an IPBES. He noted that capacity is critical and the gap analysis has not adequately spanned the landscape on capacity building and some countries have asked for a deeper analysis. He welcomed the productive discussion on potential functions of an IPBES and noted that the next discussion should focus on governance. In doing so, he called on delegates to consider: scientific credibility; an IPBES independent from ongoing MEAs; or “independent” yet with a secretariat embedded in one of the conventions’ secretariats.