



IPBES III HIGHLIGHTS WEDNESDAY, 9 JUNE 2010

On Wednesday, after hearing the reports from the drafting group on the Busan outcomes document and from the contact group on options for processes, IPBES III participants engaged in negotiation on text for the function or work programme of the new platform. A contact group on outstanding issues on generation of knowledge and regular and timely assessments convened midday. In the afternoon, delegates continued negotiating text on assessments, policy formulation and implementation, and building capacity. The contact group on the function or work programme of the new platform reconvened in the evening. At the end of the contact group meeting, the vice-chair urged delegates to reflect on the outstanding issues and resume discussions on Thursday in a spirit of compromise.

CONSIDERATION OF WHETHER TO ESTABLISH AN IPBES

PROCESSES THAT A NEW PLATFORM, IF ESTABLISHED, SHOULD SUPPORT: In the morning, Brazil reported on the progress made in the Contact Group. He noted that the current text reflects the main points but underscored that some countries wanted to see different wording as well. He also highlighted that while Brazil and other countries preferred options one and two, they were trying to be flexible and work on the text of option four on requests from governments conveyed through MEAs, in addition to requests from all relevant stakeholders.

FUNCTION OR WORK PROGRAMME OF THE NEW PLATFORM, IF THE LATTER IS ESTABLISHED:
Generation of knowledge: In the morning, vice-chair Watson underscored that: there was no support for option three on an IPBES not playing an active role in knowledge generation, and the majority expressed preference for option two, wherein an IPBES identifies and prioritizes key scientific information, with reference to “at various scales” in brackets, and facilitates dialogue to catalyze efforts to generate new knowledge, but would not directly undertake work to generate new knowledge.

Watson, supported by MEXICO, GRENADA, the EU, REPUBLIC OF KOREA and BRAZIL proposed adding reference to generating new knowledge “using existing mechanisms.” BRAZIL, however, added that using existing mechanisms is fine to the extent that it fulfills the needs. SOUTH AFRICA proposed adding the qualifier “where possible.” CHINA, supported by the US and AUSTRALIA, proposed moving the reference to “using existing mechanisms”

to a chapeau, as such use applies to other functions of an IPBES. MEXICO, supported by NORWAY and GRENADA, with CHINA objecting, proposed taking the brackets off “at various scales.” CHINA proposed bracketing the reference to “dialogue” in the text and adding such reference to the chapeau as well, with MEXICO making a similar proposal. ARGENTINA, supported by IRAN, proposed incorporating the concept of regional balance. The EU, supported by AUSTRALIA, proposed referring to new “primary” knowledge, with IRAN noting that adding qualifiers creates more ambiguity. The US agreed with CANADA that research should be the focus and thus proposed referring to “primary research.” Vice-chair Watson suggested the phrase “would not undertake new research.”

In the afternoon, after a contact group met to address bracketed language, delegates agreed to change the text from “various skills” to “appropriate scales,” while retaining brackets on the facilitation of dialogue and the catalyzation of new knowledge.

Regular and timely assessments: In the morning, delegates focused on option one on regular and timely assessments, including comprehensive global and subglobal assessments and thematic issues at appropriate scales. CHINA suggested retaining the reference to “global, regional and sub-regional” and deleting “subglobal” and “major regional.” Delegates also agreed to delete the reference to “responsive” assessments. UGANDA called for inclusion of “freshwater” after “marine and terrestrial.” GRENADA cautioned against “opening up a pandora’s box” in attempting to include all possible topics, and called for the use of “comprehensive.” Most delegates supported this proposal. NORWAY asked that “freshwater, marine and terrestrial” remain in brackets, while the US preferred to elaborate these terms in the summary report of the meeting.

Noting that the objective of an IPBES is to enhance synergies with other biodiversity-related mechanisms, ARGENTINA underlined the need to focus on gaps. “Peer-review” was initially retained in brackets pending discussion of new language introduced by the US to underscore that the principle of independent, peer-reviewed and credible assessments is critical to the success of an IPBES.

Noting the need to give guidance to the plenary, CANADA proposed including the reference to “emerging” issues, with AUSTRALIA adding “trends.” However, IUCN, supported by the EU and ISRAEL, stressed that a focus on emerging

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issues and trends might narrow the potential scope of future assessments. CHINA added that this concept is difficult to define.

In the afternoon, after a contact group reviewed bracketed language, delegates agreed to retain brackets on “freshwater, marine and terrestrial” biodiversity and ecosystem services. Delegates accepted text on a number of issues regarding assessments, including the reference to the linkages between biodiversity and ecosystem services, and inclusion of a separate sentence, proposed by the US, requiring that an IPBES conduct assessments through scientific peer-review. Delegates were split on whether an IPBES should assess emerging issues. IRAN and BRAZIL said that the identification of emerging issues was policy-prescriptive and should be identified in plenary, while NEW ZEALAND and others argued that an IPBES could play a critical role in raising awareness about new and unrecognized threats. Delegates agreed that the identification of the need for assessments at the national level should be reserved for governments, according to a statement by UGANDA, echoed by COLOMBIA, GAMBIA and ALGERIA. CHINA and GAMBIA highlighted assessments as an opportunity to build capacity in developing countries. AUSTRALIA noted difficulties in the negotiations due to a lack of clarity on the use of the word “knowledge.”

Policy formulation and implementation: Delegates negotiated option one wherein an IPBES would support policy formulation and implementation by identifying policy-relevant tools and methodologies, such as those arising from assessments, and work with other existing structures including the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment follow-up strategy to enable decision makers to gain access to and apply those methods and tools, and to catalyse further development. Based on vice-chair Watson’s suggestion to keep consistent with work done on other sections of the text, references to “other structures and the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment” and “applying tools and methods” were deleted. BRAZIL stated that an IPBES should actively engage with tools and methods and suggested that an IPBES “promote” as well as catalyse their development. ARGENTINA supported narrowing the extent to which an IPBES would promote and catalyse development of tools and methodologies, to which IRAN proposed adding the qualifier “where necessary.” Delegates agreed to an unbracketed text on this paragraph.

Building capacity: Though vice-chair Watson was able to keep discussion limited to option two, the text on building capacity was a sticking point for many delegates, with several participants showing inflexibility on certain key elements. After lengthy discussion, Watson requested the contact group chaired by Australia, Brazil and Colombia to continue negotiations on the bracketed text into the evening following the close of the plenary.

Delegates were in agreement that an IPBES should play an active role in capacity-building. The critical capacity-building issues included the prioritization, provision and type of support offered by an IPBES, the types of activities which would be supported, and the means for stimulating funding for these activities. Countries were particularly concerned with preventing an IPBES from acting as a financial mechanism.

Several countries including ETHIOPIA, CHINA, UGANDA, and GRENADA expressed interest in using countries’ economic needs as a means to prioritize support for capacity-building. MEXICO, concerned that this would divert the purpose of the text, opposed this and added, with others, that the text should not create the assumption that an IPBES will become a financial mechanism. COLOMBIA, INDONESIA, JAPAN, and ALGERIA agreed that the text should not prejudice prioritization for an IPBES plenary. Delegates agreed to keep the original, non-qualifying language, as suggested by the vice-chair, but ETHIOPIA requested to then identify priorities as “multidimensional.”

On the provision of support, the vice-chair recommended keeping the original language of “providing,” and the EU proposed an IPBES “call for” support rather than “provide” it, stating “provide” generates the idea that an IPBES is a financial mechanism. ALGERIA, echoed by BRAZIL, agreed that an IPBES should not be a financing mechanism but stated it should be able to mobilize funds when and where they are needed. MEXICO, supported by IRAN, ALGERIA and ARGENTINA, stated it was important to recall geographic balance but generally agreed that an IPBES “provide” support. SOUTH AFRICA agreed with BRAZIL to keep “provide.”

At the close of the plenary countries had not finished discussion on the issue of “providing” financial support. JAPAN proposed removing “financial” but Watson, with the agreement of delegates, proposed broadening the text to “financial and other support.” CHINA preferred to leave the decision on priority activities to an IPBES plenary. The US proposed using the same language as in option one, which was accepted by BRAZIL. IRAN, with SOUTH AFRICA and ETHIOPIA, proposed removing any qualifying text on activities.

Other matters: On the draft joint-statement on an IPBES circulated in the afternoon referring, *inter alia*, to the fact that “attempting to create a mechanism to improve the science-policy interface for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity without addressing the key capacity-building needs of developing countries and providing the means of implementation necessary to accomplish such a challenge is an enterprise doomed from the start,” GHANA clarified that it should not be viewed as a statement coming from the African Group and the like-minded megadiverse countries, since they have not had the opportunity to review it yet.

At the end of the plenary session, the chair proposed reconvening the drafting group on the Busan outcomes document. The US noted its disagreement with holding the drafting exercise, since there is no basis for a decision yet and negotiations are at a crucial stage. She added that such exercise would create some disruption by backtracking and discussing paragraphs that at the moment have no context yet. She urged that the drafting group reconvene only after the discussion on the substance was concluded. The EU and CHINA echoed such concern.