

## IPBES 10 Highlights: Wednesday, 30 August 2023

The tenth session of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES 10) advanced its consideration of the summary for policymakers (SPM) of the thematic assessment of invasive alien species (IAS) and their control. Delegates also continued discussing the task force workplans and the topics to be addressed in future IPBES reports up to 2030.

### Working Group 1

The morning session of Working Group (WG) 1 started with Assessment Co-Chair Helen Roy introducing key terms that caused confusion the [previous day](#), and were revised in accordance with delegates' comments. She clarified that "biological invasions" refer to aspects of the process, and not to IAS themselves, and suggested using "drivers of change" to ensure consistency with the [2019 IPBES Global Assessment](#).

Delegates continued discussing the definition of "biological invasions," with members questioning references to: native species; impact to nature; and human activities. Assessment Co-Chair Roy explained that impact to nature is part of IAS but not of the process; and that while some IAS are moved by natural processes, the scope of the assessment refers to those moved by human activities. Discussions on the definition of biological invasions will continue.

A lengthy discussion took place on the definition of "establishment." Delegates suggested adding a temporal element and references to: "colonization"; a "viable," "dominant," or "self-perpetuating" population; and human intervention. They eventually agreed to the original proposal, defining establishment as the production of a viable self-sustaining population.

On the definition of "spread," delegates questioned the meaning of a "secondary spread" and suggested reference to new areas or territories. They further discussed whether to add references to the stages of introduction or establishment. They agreed to refer to dispersal and/or movement in a new region or range.

Members were able to reach consensus on definitions on: native species; alien species; established alien species; IAS; introduction pathways; and drivers. Discussions will continue on the definition of negative impacts.

On a paragraph recording the documented impacts of established alien species, some members suggested adding percentages to make the data clearer for policymakers. Assessment Co-Chair Roy pointed out that including percentages would not reflect the diversity of the taxonomy addressed in the paragraph and that impacts cannot be quantified in percentages.

On a sentence defining IAS, members deliberated whether to add that IAS are established and spread beyond confinement, cultivation, and capacity. Some delegates pointed out that this would exclude wild species and those established and spread inadvertently. As such, they decided to retain the phrase "established and spread" for future discussions and delete

reference to spread "beyond confinement, cultivation and capacity."

On a sentence reflecting impacts of IAS per geographical region and type of ecosystem, some members suggested including a reference to islands. Following lengthy discussions, members agreed to: include a separate sentence on islands, without reaching agreement on its content; split the references to terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems; and reflect data gaps.

On the number of recorded global animal and plant extinctions, following discussion on whether to include percentages found in other reports, delegates agreed on the number reflected in the assessment report.

At the end of the morning session, WG 1 Co-Chair Douglas Beard stressed the need for a faster pace in the deliberations, urging delegates not to "let the perfect be the enemy of the good."

The afternoon session started with members debating how to balance the use of percentages and examples in the SPM to aid policymakers. Delegates concurred that having too many percentages within one paragraph may cause confusion. On the use of examples, many members agreed with Assessment Co-Chair Roy's explanation that they help in understanding the complex processes mentioned in the report, while others considered that paragraphs with too many examples add limited value.

While agreeing that climate change can increase the rate of establishment and the spread of many IAS on islands, a few members questioned the notion of disproportionality, noting that other regions are also vulnerable to climate change. Members further discussed at length local extinctions of native species in protected areas caused by IAS, focusing on whether to include a list of examples. Discussions on both issues will continue as delegates could not reach consensus.

On a sentence regarding the estimated annual economic costs of biological invasions in 2019, one member observed that the indicators of such economic costs have not been specified and that the time period used was not recent enough. Other members disagreed, stating that: given the relevant literature, the period is sufficiently recent; the calculation is clearly established; and what is more important than the figure itself, is highlighting the gravity of the economic cost of IAS. Another delegate suggested the inclusion of a footnote to address the concern over indicators. Assessment Co-Chair Roy remarked that traceability is already included in the sentence. This issue will be further discussed.

On a paragraph on IAS overwhelmingly undermining the good quality of life, a delegate suggested noting that the harmful effects caused by IAS exacerbate poverty in the communities that depend on forests. The Co-Chairs noted they will reflect on this ahead of the next session.

On a reference to invasive alien plants with highly allergenic pollen, delegates agreed to delete the examples, noting they are not relevant at the global level.

On a sentence addressing evidence of inequities and marginalization in gender- and age-specific activities where IAS impede access to natural resources or require management,

delegates agreed to add reference to Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs), ethnic minorities, migrants, and poor rural and urban communities, as disproportionately impacted by invasive alien vector-borne diseases.

Delegates could not reach consensus on a sentence noting that alien species that are promoted for economic development may become IAS. They agreed that, in some cases, IAS have been unintentionally transported and introduced through emergency relief and aid, increasing the risk of possible negative impact on quality of life.

Regarding documented IAS on “lands managed, used, and/or owned by Indigenous Peoples,” Coordinating Lead Author Hanno Seebens explained that local communities were deliberately not mentioned as this would not accurately reflect the information used. Members pointed out that the body of the paragraph mentions local communities several times. The Assessment’s Co-Chairs agreed to revise the chapeau of the paragraph in more general terms for consistency. Co-Chair Beard noted that the inquiry by a non-governmental organization (NGO) on what the experts considered as Indigenous Peoples for the assessment report will be addressed at a later point. Discussions continued in an evening session.

### **Working Group 2**

**Building capacity, strengthening knowledge foundations, and supporting policy:** WG 2 Co-Chair Floyd Homer (Group of Latin America and the Caribbean, GRULAC), invited delegates to address the workplan for objective 3.b (enhanced recognition of and work with Indigenous and local knowledge (ILK) systems).

Delegates considered adding a new paragraph on the development of a workplan to address the results of the review of the inclusion of ILK in IPBES functions and deliverables, to be presented to IPBES 11 for approval.

They then engaged in a lengthy debate over a proposed paragraph on the development of ILK conceptual and methodological approaches to be included in the scoping process to guide new assessments. The original proponent aimed for the approaches to orient on how to work with ILK, while another member emphasized it should also address how to work with knowledge holders themselves, adding that the collaboration should be mutually beneficial. Consultations on this will continue informally.

Members agreed to add the engagement with relevant IPBES-related networks, including the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network (BES-Net), in order to strengthen the approach of working with ILK systems, as part of the activities for strengthening the implementation of the participatory mechanism.

Turning to the workplan for objective 4.a (advanced work on policy instruments, policy support tools, and methodologies), delegates agreed to the preparation of five fact sheets based on the IAS assessment. On the regional online dialogue meetings, members agreed to promote the use of completed IPBES assessments through “lessons learned and best practices, and the sharing of experience.”

Members then discussed the workplan for objective 4.b (advanced work on scenarios and models of biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services). After one member requested clarifications on the meaning of the concept “communities of practice,” delegates agreed to include a footnote pointing to the definition contained in the information document on work related to building capacity ([IPBES/10/INF/9](#)), which centers on the notion that they are self-organizing groups.

Delegates began to debate one member’s proposed addition of several paragraphs regarding the need for further work on the development of the methodological guidance for Mother Earth-centric scenarios and models in the context of the Nature Futures Framework.

Discussions continued in an evening session.

**Additional elements of the IPBES rolling work programme up to 2030:** WG 2 Co-Chair Julia Marton-Lefèvre (Western

European and Others Group) summed up the status of discussions. Among others, she noted the third fast-track assessment slot would remain open, with a new call for topics to be issued in due course.

Regarding the subject of the second fast-track assessment, different views persisted. Many members reiterated support for the topic of spatial planning and ecological connectivity. One member preferred for the assessment to focus on living well in balance and harmony with Mother Earth, pointing to their detailed proposal of what this would entail and noting it goes beyond what the Bureau and the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) suggested to cover as part of the second global assessment.

Members then turned to the initial scoping report for a methodological assessment on monitoring biodiversity and nature’s contributions to people, starting with its scope and rationale. Delegates engaged in a lengthy discussion over which multilateral processes the report would support, advancing various combinations of:

- the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), with a possible reference to the balanced and enhanced implementation of its three objectives;
- other multilateral environmental agreements;
- other biodiversity-related conventions;
- the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and
- other relevant processes and efforts.

Members agreed the report will prioritize the headline indicators of the Global Biodiversity Framework and also assess data availability for other indicators. They further converged on the report assessing the current capacity, capability, and resources to collect and analyze data. However, members disagreed over whether the report should assess the provision of means of implementation. One member objected to the idea of developing a global biodiversity observing system.

Regarding the timeline and baseline of the assessment, some members took issue with the specification that the assessment would “go as far back as 50 years,” stressing it is not consistent with the relevant CBD decision and suggesting the timeline should be broader. Pointing to the remainder of the section, the MEP clarified that longer-term records will be used when appropriate and underscored the relevance of giving guidance to authors on what to focus on. With one member reiterating its objection, the phrase was kept in brackets.

Delegates engaged in a lengthy debate over a paragraph specifying what information and sources the assessment will draw on. Several members favored a short statement, noting it will draw on a range of literature sources in line with the procedures for the preparation of Platform deliverables. With others seeking to list specific types of literature, debates related to, among others: whether government reports are considered grey literature; whether to refer only to “publicly available” grey literature; and specifying examples of grey literature, such as reports by industry and international organizations. Several members emphasized the distinctiveness of ILK, noting it does not fall under grey literature.

### **In the Corridors**

“We are IPBES! We should have faith in the quality of our report.” These words by a seasoned negotiator resolved a floating moment of uncertainty in the negotiations on the assessment on invasive alien species (IAS), as one delegation implied reopening the assessment report to include additional data. Following that vote of confidence for the expertise that went into the preparation of the report, members resumed their work in good spirit.

Despite the requests by Co-Chair Beard for increased efficiency, which led to a much faster pace during the afternoon session, a night session could not be avoided. Tired but committed delegates engaged in the marathon negotiations, trying to ensure the smooth and timely adoption of the assessment, scheduled for Saturday. A passionate delegate, waiting for the evening session to start, stressed that “IAS are so important and this assessment is so crucial that I would not mind staying up late for the rest of the week if that is what it takes.”