



IPBES the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

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1) background

The need for an intergovernmental platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services (IPBES)

One of the major challenges for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services is in ensuring that decisions and policies are made with the best-available scientific information. To help address this, a wide range of national, regional and international scientific and science-policy mechanisms and processes have been established in recent decades. IPBES is designed as a global mechanism to further strengthen the contribution of all these processes for policy making, through enhancing the credibility, legitimacy and saliency of the information on which policy makers depend for decisions on biodiversity and ecosystem services.

IPBES arose from the coming together of two thematically-related initiatives – the IMoSEB consultation (2005-2007) and the various ongoing follow-up processes to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment¹, including the growing number of sub-global assessments underway.

The IPBES negotiations process

Three ad-hoc intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder consultation and negotiation meetings have been held on IPBES, which agreed on the need to establish an efficient international science-policy interface platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services.

- The first meeting (IPBES-1) took place in November 2008 in Putrajaya, Malaysia. It came to broad agreement that options for strengthening the science-policy interface should continue to be explored. It was also agreed that a gap analysis should be undertaken, in order to determine and assess the existing science-policy mechanisms on biodiversity and ecosystem services
- The second meeting (IPBES-2) was convened in Nairobi, Kenya, in October 2009, with the objective to agree on ways to strengthen the science-policy interface on issues relating to biodiversity and ecosystem services.. Discussions were supported mainly by the completed Gap Analysis and the “Needs and options” paper, highlighting five main needs to improve the science policy interface: scientific independence; knowledge generation, knowledge assessment, knowledge use, and the need for building capacity to generate, assess and use knowledge.
- The third and final negotiation meeting (IPBES-3) was organized in June 2010 in Busan, Republic of Korea. The main working document “Options for improving the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services” formed the basis of negotiations at the meeting, providing options around 6

¹ see www.maweb.org

considerations, including on the need of a new mechanism, and its possible functions, legal status, governance, secretariat, and funding modality. At this meeting, governments concluded that an intergovernmental science policy platform for biodiversity and ecosystem services should be established to strengthen the science policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services and also agreed on many of the modalities and principles for the operation of IPBES and on its key functions. The results of these negotiations are presented in the “Busan outcome”².

2) The Busan Outcome:

It was agreed at IPBES-3 that IPBES will be established as an intergovernmental mechanism and will be administered by one or more existing UN bodies. It will focus on the needs of governments, although suggestions on the needs and issues to be addressed will also be considered from other stakeholders, who will be able to participate as observers in the plenary through procedures to be determined. IPBES will be funded through voluntary contributions from Governments, United Nations bodies, GEF, other intergovernmental organizations and other stakeholders, such as the private sector and foundations.

IPBES will have a strong focus on comprehensive and thematic assessments of the state of knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystem services at regional and other scales, catalyzing -but not undertaking- new research to fill information gaps, supporting use of information in policy processes, and supporting strengthened capacity for science and assessment.

Governments also agreed on a set of principles to guide the work and operation of IPBES, including that it must be independent, scientifically credible, relevant and legitimate. Issues upon which further discussion is needed include:

- The nature of the collaboration with existing entities and initiatives, such as the IPCC, GEO or the Regular Process for the assessment of the state of marine environment.
- The process for use and sharing of data and information, including on traditional knowledge
- The relationship to the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and their mandates
- The need for appropriate balance in geographical, interdisciplinary and gender contributions.

3) Next steps in the establishment of IPBES

The 65th Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) is invited to consider the conclusions of the Busan meeting and to take appropriate action for the establishment of an IPBES³. In the course of 2011, it is expected that the governing bodies of the hosting UN organizations will establish institutional arrangements to host IPBES and define their respective roles. In the meantime, UNEP was requested to continue to facilitate the IPBES process, in collaboration with UNESCO, FAO and UNDP until a permanent IPBES secretariat is established. Further details on the process and procedures, work plan, and structure of IPBES secretariat and working groups will need to be decided at plenary meetings of IPBES.

4) Implications of the establishment of IPBES for civil society

IPBES will become the authoritative source of knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystem services. As much of the scientific expertise is found in civil society, the Platform will need to connect not just to the international science networks, but also to the wider civil society expertise on biodiversity and ecosystem services. More generally, meaningful participation of relevant non-governmental and other stakeholders

² The Busan outcome is available from : www.ipbes.net/meetings/Documents/ipbes3/

³ The Busan Outcome

will be critical for the success of IPBES, as these stakeholders are instrumental in conserving and sustainably using biodiversity and ecosystem services. Some of the key issues regarding the impacts of the establishment of IPBES for civil society include:

- There is a need to design sound rules and procedures to define multistakeholder contributions in both IPBES' governance and programme and ensure appropriate representation of relevant non-governmental stakeholders in the governance bodies of IPBES.
- IPBES will provide an opportunity for knowledge from civil society to be brought to the attention of policy makers. However, much of the knowledge in civil society is found in grey literature and IPBES will affect how decision makers use and source scientific information on biodiversity and ecosystem services. Therefore, to ensure their credibility, organizations will need to put in place quality control processes to ensure information provided is credible and accessible to the process.
- As both a supplier and user of information on biodiversity and ecosystem services, civil society needs to be closely involved at all levels in IPBES and needs to be fully aware of the outputs of IPBES. An internal or external operational structure of IPBES, established to promote the participation and awareness of civil society, would be an important consideration.

5) IUCN support to the process

IUCN, including through its Members, Commissions and Secretariat, has been involved from the very first consultations on IPBES, bringing to bear the perspectives of the civil society, including scientific organizations, field practitioners and business. IUCN also collaborated with DIVERSITAS (an international programme on biodiversity science) and ICSU (International Council for Science) to consult and synthesize perspectives of the scientific community and broader civil society on the need for, and possible function and form of IPBES; the outcomes of these consultations⁴ informed, in particular, the second IPBES meeting.

IUCN will continue its support to the establishment of IPBES, including through:

- Further engaging civil society, including by supporting the definition and modalities of the IPBES rules and procedures for multistakeholder involvement in IPBES governance and for multistakeholder input to planning and implementation of the work programme;
- Continuing to support the negotiation process on IPBES at the UN General Assembly and the meetings of the governing bodies of IPBES co-hosting UN institutions, with the view to facilitating discussions on unresolved issues.
- Preparing to support future IPBES programmatic activities through provision of knowledge and institutional support to the process.

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⁴ See http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/ipbes_online_consultation_summary_messages_2_oct09.pdf