

### The expected role of IPBES

In June 2010, after 5 years of negotiation representatives of approximately 90 countries gathered in Busan, Korea, approved the formation of a new entity the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services/IPBES. Specific discussions on IPBES started following the final meeting of the multi-stakeholder international steering committee for the consultative process on an International Mechanism of Scientific Expertise on Biodiversity (IMoSEB) in November 2007. The consultation towards IMoSEB decided to invite the Executive Director of UNEP - in collaboration with governments and other partners - to convene an intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting to consider the establishment of an intergovernmental mechanism for biodiversity and ecosystem services.

The Busan Outcome was welcomed by the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity/CBD in Nagoya in October 2010, and was subsequently considered at the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). UNGA passed a resolution requesting UNEP to convene a plenary meeting to fully operationalize IPBES at the earliest opportunity. This resolution was then taken on board by UNEP in a decision at the 26th session of the UNEP Governing Council meeting, held in February 2011.

The plenary meeting was held in two sessions. The first session was held from 3 to 7 October 2011 in Nairobi. The second session of the plenary was hosted by UNEP, in collaboration with UNESCO, FAO and UNDP, in Panama City from 16 to 21 April 2012. There, many of the modalities and institutional arrangements for the Platform were finalized and 94 Governments adopted a resolution establishing the Platform as an independent intergovernmental body.

“Biodiversity from terrestrial, marine, coastal, and inland water ecosystems provides the basis for ecosystems and the services they provide that underpin human well-being. However, biodiversity and ecosystem services are declining at an unprecedented rate, and in order to address this challenge, adequate local, national and international policies need to be adopted and implemented. To achieve this, decision makers need scientifically credible and independent information that takes into account the complex relationships between biodiversity, ecosystem services, and people. They also need effective methods to interpret this scientific information in order to make informed decisions. The scientific community also needs to understand the needs of decision makers better in order to provide them with the relevant information. In essence, the dialogue between the scientific community, governments, and other stakeholders on biodiversity and ecosystem services needs to be strengthened” (<http://www.ipbes.net/about-ipbes.html>).

To this end, a new platform has been established by the international community – the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services/IPBES. was established in April 2012, as an independent intergovernmental body open to all member countries of the United Nations. The members are committed to building IPBES as the leading intergovernmental body for assessing the state of the planet’s biodiversity, its ecosystems and the essential services they provide to society.

IPBES provides a mechanism recognized by both the scientific and policy communities to synthesize, review, assess and critically evaluate relevant information and knowledge generated worldwide by governments, academia, scientific organizations, non-governmental organizations and indigenous communities. This involves a credible group of experts in conducting assessments of such information and knowledge in a transparent way. IPBES is unique in that it will aim to strengthen capacity for the effective use of science in decision-making at all levels. IPBES will also aim to address the needs of Multilateral Environmental Agreements that are related to biodiversity and ecosystem services, and build on existing processes ensuring synergy and complementarities in each other’s work. IPBES will be the first global mechanism that brings together information regarding the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services, synthesizes that information in a policy-relevant manner, and provides analyses of that information for decision makers.

The first meeting of the Platform’s Plenary (IPBES-1) will be held in Bonn, Germany from 21 to 26 January 2013, hosted by the Government of Germany. Regional and stakeholder consultations will take place one day prior to the meeting on Sunday, 20 January 2013. The meeting will aim to agree on the remaining rules of procedures for the meetings of the platform, consider other rules of procedure for the platform, elect Bureau and Multidisciplinary Expert Panel members, and agree on the next steps by which the IPBES work program can become operational as soon as possible.

IPBES role goes far beyond assessments. The new Intergovernmental Platform must, as stated by Hulme et al (2011), “move beyond conventional scientific knowledge assessments that legitimize, almost exclusively, only peer-reviewed material. Knowledge established across all scales (especially the knowledge of local and indigenous peoples) and validated in multiple ways must be eligible for inclusion in IPBES processes. Changes in biodiversity are first experienced locally and thus many forms of local expertise have particular relevance for biodiversity issues. Second, we should link IPBES assessment results to decision-making at multiple spatial scales (including tackling biodiversity loss at the grassroots

level). Both of these goals require all aspects of capacity-building, including empowerment of different kinds of actors, to be reflected in the structural design of IPBES”.

The intergovernmental body for biodiversity must draw on a much broader range of knowledge and stakeholders than the IPCC, say Esther Turnhout and colleagues.

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Turnhout, E.; Bloomfield, B.; Hulme, M.; Vogel, J. & Wynne, B. 2012 Conservation policy: Listen to the voices of experience. *Nature* 488: 454–455.

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