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**Plenary meeting to determine modalities and institutional  
arrangements for an intergovernmental science-policy  
platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services  
Second session  
Panama City, 16–21 April 2012**

**Identifying how an intergovernmental science-policy platform  
on biodiversity and ecosystem services can build effectively on  
the work of existing organizations and initiatives**

**Note by the secretariat**

The annex to the present note highlights the need for an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services to build on the experience of existing organizations and initiatives when planning and implementing its work, and to suggest mechanisms which might be considered for achieving this in a document entitled “Identifying how IPBES can build effectively on existing organizations and initiatives”. The annex is presented as received from the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre, and has not been formally edited.

## Annex

### Identifying how IPBES can build effectively on existing organizations and initiatives

*Submitted by the secretariat of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF),  
the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN),  
and the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC)*

#### Introduction

1. Through the Busan outcome,<sup>1</sup> representatives of Governments at the third ad hoc intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting on an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services, held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 7 to 11 June 2010, set out some overarching guidance relating to the work programme of the platform. In paragraph 7(a) it is made quite clear that the future platform should “*Collaborate with existing initiatives on biodiversity and ecosystem services ... to fill gaps and build upon their work while avoiding duplication*”.
2. In the working document on possible elements of the work programme currently under discussion,<sup>2</sup> a number of additional considerations are set out that need to be taken into account when developing and implementing the IPBES work programme. Amongst these is the issue of building on existing initiatives and experiences. It is noted that “*many organizations, networks, programmes and processes are already carrying out work that is directly relevant to IPBES and a crucial issue for IPBES will be to effectively engage with these institutions while continuing to ensure its own integrity*”.
3. The authors of this paper, the secretariat of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) each carry out activities likely to be directly relevant to a future IPBES, but it remains unclear how these existing activities will be drawn upon. The intention of this information document is to once again draw attention to the need for the future work of the platform to draw on existing organizations and initiatives in planning and implementing its work, and to suggest mechanisms which might be considered for achieving this.

#### Previous discussion on this issue

4. The IPBES gap analysis<sup>3</sup> prepared for the second ad hoc intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting made a substantial review of the existing science-policy interface, and in doing so drew attention to the work of a significant number of potentially relevant ongoing activities and initiatives. A significant number of these activities, including some of the assessments and the long-term observation and monitoring systems, have been in place for many years.
5. Subsequently, each of the documents and information documents addressing the four functions of IPBES<sup>4</sup> and more specifically on the work programme elements<sup>5</sup> have identified or refer to existing activities relevant to the functions and work programme elements being discussed. Across all of these documents there is reference to a significant number of existing organizations and initiatives.
6. In preparation for the third ad hoc intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting, the Nordic Council of Ministers asked the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre to prepare an information document on the potential relationships between IPBES and existing institutions.<sup>6</sup> This document provided summaries of some 80 relevant organizations, networks, programmes and processes, with further detail on 20 of these.
7. The information document referred to also recognised that a key step in understanding how these organizations, networks, programmes and processes could potentially contribute to IPBES was achieving greater clarity in:

<sup>1</sup> UNEP/IPBES/3/3

<sup>2</sup> UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/2

<sup>3</sup> UNEP/IPBES/2/INF/1

<sup>4</sup> UNEP/IPBES/3/INF/1; UNEP/IPBES/3/INF/2; UNEP/IPBES/3/INF/3; UNEP/IPBES.MI/1/INF/3; UNEP/IPBES.MI/1/INF/4; UNEP/IPBES.MI/1/INF/5; UNEP/IPBES.MI/1/INF/6

<sup>5</sup> UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/2; UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/INF/3

<sup>6</sup> UNEP/IPBES/3/INF/11

- (a) What activities IPBES will do itself
- (b) What activities IPBES will task others to do on its behalf
- (c) What activities IPBES will promote, facilitate and or catalyse, either directly or indirectly

#### Potential mechanisms for collaboration

8. Until the IPBES work programme is agreed, it is difficult to be specific on what existing organizations, networks, programmes and processes will be important for its implementation, but from discussion to date it seems inevitable that various IPBES activities will need to draw on at least the following:

- (a) Observation and long-term monitoring programmes, and the data capture, management and dissemination activities associated with these including mobilization of and access to historic data;
- (b) Collaborative networks and communities of practice supporting relevant activities, including sub-global assessments and development and use of policy-support tools
- (c) Existing assessment processes that are already supporting decision making on biodiversity and ecosystem services at national, regional and/or global levels
- (d) Specialist organizations, networks, programmes and processes that address issues and themes identified by IPBES as priorities
- (e) Those organizations and institutions that are supporting capacity development activities relevant to IPBES, particularly in developing countries

9. The information document previously submitted on the potential relationships between IPBES and existing institutions<sup>7</sup> identified various mechanisms for promoting and facilitating involvement of relevant organizations, networks, programmes and processes in supporting implementation of a future IPBES work programme. The following are adapted from this list in light of subsequent discussion:

- (a) Liaising and communicating: Given the breadth of organizations involved in biodiversity it will be important for IPBES to find effective way to communicate what it is doing, to indicate potential opportunities for involvement, and to liaise with relevant organizations known to have particularly relevant interests.
- (b) Recognising what others produce or do as contributions to IPBES: It is inevitable that some organizations are already carrying out activities directly relevant to IPBES that could be readily accepted or adopted as contributions to IPBES. Consideration could be given to ways to identify and appropriate recognise these activities and products.
- (c) Promoting cooperation and coordination: Following directly on from the previous point, it is conceivable that IPBES could provide the necessary impetus for increased cooperation and collaboration between organizations working on similar issues, so that they can together deliver a product or service that IPBES needs more efficiently.
- (d) Providing supporting mandates for the relevant work of others: As an intergovernmental body, IPBES may be able to provide mandates to existing organizations and activities that would enable them to get increased recognition for their work, and potentially also increased access to funding as a result.
- (e) Influencing the priorities of others: If IPBES as an intergovernmental body can clearly identify priorities and the reasons for those priorities, then many organization, networks, programmes and processes relevant to IPBES – including funding bodies - are likely to take account of those priorities in their own planning and prioritization processes.
- (f) Influencing working practices: At a minimum this can be achieved by promoting the use of standard methodologies, frameworks and tools, and access to information on lessons learnt. Each of these has the potential to increase harmonization in approaches, so that people are doing things in similar ways and can more easily share the resulting data, information and experience.

10. It is perhaps also important to recognise that there is strong potential for IPBES to deliver early achievements (also referred to elsewhere as ‘quick wins’, or ‘low hanging fruit’) through working actively with existing organizations, network, programmes and processes on areas of common interest.

<sup>7</sup> UNEP/IPBES/3/INF/11

**Possible steps to take in order to achieve this**

11. With the imminent formal establishment of IPBES, it is important to clarify how the platform would relate to the existing landscape of organizations, networks, programmes and processes relevant to its work, otherwise there would be a risk of duplication, undermining existing work, and not taking proper account of existing experience.
12. However, in doing so it is important to recognise that different approaches may be needed for different parts of the work programme. For example it already seems to be widely accepted that assessments would be done by scientists working as individuals, but that capacity building would be done by many institutions.
13. Therefore, taking account of this, and in the context of the principles agreed in Busan, the following approaches are suggested. These will also form the basis for further consultation with delegations during the Panama meeting.
14. **Communication strategy and stakeholder involvement:** Consideration should be given to the best means of communicating to existing initiatives the work that is planned by IPBES so that these initiatives are aware of the opportunities, and understand what the best means for engagement with the IPBES work programme are likely to be.
15. **Rules of procedure:** Consideration should be given to what procedures or rules of procedure might be necessary in order to help ensure that existing initiatives are appropriately involved and built upon in implementing a future IPBES work programme, while at the same time ensuring that the independence and integrity of IPBES is maintained.
16. **Bodies established by IPBES:** Consideration should be given to including representation of appropriate existing initiatives on Working Groups or other structures established to implement the platform's work programme, set up according to the various options outlined in working document UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/3.
17. **Action by the IPBES Plenary:** In a range of cases all that will be needed is for IPBES to provide mandates, or to otherwise influence others, so that IPBES-relevant activities of existing initiatives are provided additional support. Some consideration may need to be given to the extent to which IPBES wants to do this.
18. **Cost-effective implementation of IPBES:** It is clear that Governments will want to see IPBES implemented in the most cost-effective manner. In order to achieve this it may be appropriate for some activities to be carried out by other organizations, networks, programmes or processes on behalf of IPBES through strategic partnerships, joint work programming, and potentially contracts.
19. **Work programme review:** While much has already been written about the landscape of existing initiatives relevant to IPBES, it will be useful to review this in the context of an agreed work programme rather than in the context of what IPBES might do. When the work programme is revised for submission to the IPBES Plenary, a parallel process might identify the organizations, networks, programmes and processes that can most effectively support its implementation.
20. **Monitoring and evaluation:** Given that the Busan outcome clearly states that IPBES should build on existing initiatives in order to fill gaps and avoid duplication, it seems appropriate that any monitoring and evaluation process put in place should address this issue so as to understand the extent to which it is happening.
21. However in developing these plans involving other organizations it is important not to be naïve about their needs. With proper planning they can make a substantial and cost-effective contribution to IPBES, but their ability to participate is likely to be dependent on a range of issues (although this will obviously vary from one organization to another). These issues range from capacity to resource availability, and from ensuring the right mandates are in place to ensuring that contributions are appropriately recognised.
22. At the same time there is potential for an IPBES to strengthen the effectiveness of the work of existing organizations and activities, providing a structure and process that encourages and draws on their work, and helps to deliver it to wider audiences meaningfully combined with inputs from many other organizations and activities.
23. However, the most fundamental point is the opportunity that IPBES has to build on a very substantial body of experience and wide range of IPBES-relevant activities already being carried out by existing organizations, networks, programmes and processes. The opportunity to build on this must not be lost, and this will require proactive steps to be taken.