

Intergovernmental science-policy
Platform for Biodiversity and
Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

What you need
to know!



Within the past 50 years, substantial net gains in human well-being and economic development have come at the cost of unprecedented loss of biodiversity and degradation of ecosystems. More than 60 percent of ecosystem services — or the benefits received by society thanks to the functioning of ecosystems — have been degraded.

More than 1,000 experts worldwide in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) have concluded that without appropriate action the condition of ecosystem services and status of biodiversity would be in danger of further degradation. Today's international community is thus presented with the urgent challenge of strengthening the dialogue between science and policy to prevent continued reduction of biodiversity and ecosystem services — both essential to an environment that sustains human well-being.

The current science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services comprises a number of national and international programmes, organizations, mechanisms and processes. The biodiversity and ecosystem-related multilateral environmental agreements, for example, contain provisions on scientific and technical cooperation. Their contribution to policy making could, however, be strengthened if there were a mechanism to provide a scientifically sound, uniform and consistent framework for addressing biodiversity and ecosystem services challenges.

Consultations towards the establishment of an Intergovernmental science-policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) that began in 2009 will conclude with a third meeting in Busan, the Republic of Korea from June 7-11. This third meeting is the final meeting in a process that has engaged international stakeholders — including representatives from developing and developed countries, scientific institutions, and civil society organizations — in intergovernmental deliberations on an IPBES. A timeline of this UNEP-facilitated process, (see box) as well as other supplementary information, lends further insight into the nature and development of consideration of an IPBES whose future will be soon be decided by participating countries in Busan.

What is IPBES?

"IPBES" stands for Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. The purpose of this proposed platform would be to provide a scientifically sound, uniform and consistent framework to enable emerging scientific knowledge to be translated into policy action at the appropriate levels.

The overarching goals of the proposed platform are to contribute to more effective and sustainable decision-making that secures human well-being. To do so, the platform would harness existing networks of scientific experts as well as policy communities. IPBES is envisioned to complement, among others, the subsidiary bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions with scientifically credible and policy relevant information on emerging issues in the science of biodiversity and ecosystem services.



Is there a NEED for IPBES?

The current science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services is comprised of multiple national and international mechanisms and processes. The contribution of those processes to policy-making could be stronger if supported by an intergovernmental science-policy platform, which will ensure the credibility, legitimacy and relevance of emerging scientific findings and recommendations. The proposed platform would provide a framework that allows consolidation, scaling up and effective communication of lessons learnt.

The gap analysis prepared by UNEP in response to the recommendations of the first ad-hoc intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting held in Putrajaya, Malaysia in November 2008 provides extensive analysis of the needs remaining to be addressed for strengthening the science-policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services. The analysis specifically highlighted the need for improvement in the scientific independence of the science-policy interface, for strengthening collaboration and coordination in generating a shared knowledge base, for regular and timely assessments, for policy implementation support and for capacity-building, particularly in developing countries.

What has been the process towards an IPBES so far?

As biodiversity and ecosystem services are issues of international concern, the continuing process on an IPBES has involved a



diversity of stakeholders worldwide. Representatives from a wide geographic range of developing and developed countries, as well as representatives of scientific institutions, civil society organizations and intergovernmental organizations have participated in two ad hoc intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meetings. UNEP has acted as a facilitator of this ongoing process, with technical inputs and strategic guidance from various stakeholders in organizing meetings. From 7 to 11 June 2010, representatives of member states and relevant organizations will gather in Busan, Republic of Korea to deliberate on the needs for strengthening the science-policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services, and agree on whether to establish a new platform.

The process started off following the final meeting of the multi-stakeholder international steering committee for the consultative process initiated by the Government of France on an International Mechanism of Scientific Expertise on Biodiversity (IMoSEB). The Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which welcomed the agreement of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to convene an ad hoc open-ended intergovernmental multi-stakeholder meeting to consider establishing an intergovernmental mechanism for biodiversity and ecosystem services. There was also consensus among the stakeholders overseeing the Global Strategy for the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) follow-up initiative that the IMoSEB process and the MA follow-up process should merge. This sowed the seeds for the present process on IPBES.

Activities to Date:

- Concept note prepared and presented at the 9th meeting of the Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity followed by its adoption of the Decision IX/15, that welcomed the Executive Director of UNEP to convene an ad-hoc open-ended intergovernmental multi-stakeholder meeting: May 2008.
- Concept note sent to governments and stakeholders for review in an open e-peer review process: 23 July 2008.
- Revised concept note prepared by incorporating 588 comments received from 30 countries and 27 organisations, to be presented as one of the background documents for the first ad-hoc intergovernmental meeting on IPBES: 6 October 2008.
- First ad-hoc intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting on an IPBES in Putrajaya, Malaysia: 10-12 November 2008.
- At the twenty-fifth session of the UNEP GC/GMEF, the Governing Council adopted the decision 25/10, requesting the Executive Director to convene a second intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting in 2009: February 2009.
- Gap analysis on existing science-policy interfaces on biodiversity and ecosystem services prepared for the second IPBES meeting.
- Second ad-hoc meeting on an IPBES in Nairobi, Kenya: 5 -9 October 2009.
- At the eleventh special session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, held in Bali, Indonesia, adopted a decision SS.XI/3, requesting the Executive Director to convene a third and final negotiation meeting on IPBES: 24-26 February 2010.
- New IPBES website and IPBES mailing list set up: March 2010.
- Regional consultations for the third IPBES meeting in the USA, Latin America and the Caribbeans, Africa, Central Asia and Eastern Europe: April-May 2010.
- Third ad-hoc intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting on IPBES planned to be held in Busan, Republic of Korea: 7-11 June 2010.

What would an IPBES deliver?

The proposed platform would:

1. Be scientifically independent (credibility, relevance and legitimacy);
2. Provide knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystem services (collaboration and coordination for common and shared knowledge bases);

3. Provide knowledge assessments (regular and timely assessments to generate and disseminate policy relevant, not policy prescriptive, advice with full and equal involvement of experts from all regions of the world);
4. Support knowledge use for policy development and implementation;
5. Provide or facilitate capacity building to enhance the science-policy interface and mainstream biodiversity and ecosystem services for human well-being (e.g. poverty eradication, food, water and energy security).

Potential functions of the new platform will be discussed further at the Busan meeting.

How would an IPBES be structured?

The institutional structure of IPBES may have the following criteria:

- Be scientifically independent;
- Be linked with the various biodiversity and ecosystem service-related conventions so that IPBES will be the default independent scientific body for those conventions and their scientific subsidiary bodies;
- Be cost efficient;
- Not be duplicative of existing processes, and avoid adding another layer of governance.

How would an IPBES be financed?

Options for funding will be presented at the third IPBES meeting in

Busan and will largely depend on the administrative and institutional structure of the new platform, should it be created.

What remaining information is needed to come to a decision on IPBES?

Before finalizing the potential functions of a platform, it will be essential to ensure a solid understanding of the current capabilities of existing mechanisms, and strategies to strengthen them, in order to avoid duplications.

Therefore, further analysis was requested at the second IPBES meeting. The following documents will be presented at the third meeting and made available on the IPBES website.

These documents complement a working document prepared for the third meeting (UNEP/IPBES/3/2), outlining the options for strengthening improving the science-policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services.

- Analysis of the assessment landscape for biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- Current and future status of biodiversity and ecosystem service indicators.
- Analysis of capacity development for biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- Options and criteria for selecting the secretariat.
- Background on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
- Indicative budget for an intergovernmental science-policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services.

For more information on IPBES please visit: www.ipbes.net or contact **Nick Nuttall**, UNEP Spokesperson/ Head of Media
Tel: +254 762 3084 Mobile +254 (0)733 632 755,
E-mail: nick.nuttall@unep.org

