

Agenda item 10.2

## Update on the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

**Actions requested:** On the basis of the update provided here and the recommendations arising from the CSAB4 and STRP16 meetings, Standing Committee 42 is invited to:

- a) endorse the recommendation that the STRP Chair and the Secretary General should participate in the IPBES consultative group and the first plenary of IPBES;
- b) endorse the development by the STRP of an information paper for the first IPBES plenary, either as an STRP submission or as a joint submission with the other scientific advisory bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions;
- c) endorse the recommendation by the STRP that a Draft Resolution be brought to COP11 to i) highlight the potential value of IPBES in complementing and augmenting STRP work in support of Ramsar Convention implementation, and ii) set out possible mechanisms for STRP to interface with the future scientific work programme and the governance mechanisms of the IPBES, to ensure that IPBES can deliver timely, independent and credible policy-relevant information and thematic assessments on wetland biodiversity and ecosystem services.

### 1. Background

1. The Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and the Secretary General informed the 41<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee on progress with the International Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (DOC SC41-27), and the present paper provides an update on the process to establish the IPBES and to make it operational. The Standing Committee's attention is also drawn to the recommendations arising from the recent 16th meeting of the STRP and the 4th meeting of the Chairs of Scientific Advisory Bodies (CSAB) of the biodiversity-related conventions, which are also discussed below.

### 2. Recent developments in the IPBES process

2. Since SC41 in May 2010, there have been a number of developments in the IPBES process. These are covered in some detail in the briefing note provided by UNEP to the CSAB4 and STRP16 meetings in February 2011 (see Annex 1).
3. The principal milestones in the process to date have been:
  - The outcomes of the Busan meeting of 7-11 June 2010, where an agreement was reached among governments to establish IPBES. Governments also agreed on the

scope and key guiding principles, as well as an overall area of focus of the platform (identification of key scientific information for policymakers, regular and timely assessments, policy support, prioritization of capacity building needs and catalyzing financing to address such needs).<sup>1</sup>

- On 20 December 2010, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution (A/RES/65/162) requesting UNEP to convene the first plenary of the IPBES, which is intended to “determine modalities and institutional arrangements for the platform”.
- At the UNEP Governing Council meeting of Feb 2011:
  - a) In its final decision (UNEP/GC.26/L.4/Add.1) on the IPBES, the Governing Council, *inter alia*, recalled its main functions and responsibilities, including promoting the contribution of the relevant international scientific and other professional communities to the acquisition, assessment and exchange of environmental knowledge and information within the UN system. The GC recognized the need to strengthen and improve the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for human well-being through the establishment of a science-policy platform.
  - b) In operative paragraphs, among other things, the GC endorsed the outcomes of the third and final ad hoc intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting on IPBES and decides, without prejudice to the final institutional arrangements for the IPBES, to convene a plenary meeting to determine modalities and institutional arrangements for the platform at the earliest opportunity. The GC requested the UNEP Executive Director to convene this plenary meeting in 2011 in cooperation with UNESCO, the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The GC also invited the Executive Director to submit an offer of interest to signify the interest of UNEP to host or otherwise support the secretariat of the IPBES.
- 4. It is expected that the first plenary of the IPBES will be held towards the end of 2011, with a second plenary envisaged for 2012 to develop the IPBES scientific work programme.
- 3. Outcomes of the CSAB4 meeting, Gland, February 2011**
- 5. The 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies (CSAB) of the biodiversity-related conventions was held in Gland on 13 February 2011 and was briefed by Mr Neville Ash of UNEP (see Annex 1). Meeting participants discussed the IPBES at some length, addressing potential roles of the platform in providing policy-relevant information to the MEAs and biodiversity-related conventions, as well as possible mechanisms for the CSAB group as a whole and the individual MEAs and conventions to interface with the IPBES.

---

<sup>1</sup> See [www.ipbes.net/3rd-meeting-on-ipbes/3rd-ipbes-meeting-documents.html](http://www.ipbes.net/3rd-meeting-on-ipbes/3rd-ipbes-meeting-documents.html).

6. In general, there was strong support at the meeting for the IPBES. Participants considered that if the operational mechanisms and the work programme were appropriately designed, then the IPBES could deliver valuable information on biodiversity and ecosystem services to support policy-making in a way that complements and enhances the current capacity of the scientific advisory bodies of the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).
7. Much has yet to be decided on both the operational aspects of the IPBES and the development of its scientific work programme, and decisions on detail will not be made until at least the first IPBES plenary. Accordingly, the discussion at the CSAB4 meeting was focused more on identifying the questions still to be addressed, including how the CSAB group as well as individual MEAs might develop recommendations to IPBES on these issues, and how such recommendations might best be delivered into the IPBES process.
8. The CSAB4 meeting agreed that a joint information paper from CSAB should be prepared for submission to the first plenary of IPBES<sup>2</sup>, the purpose of which would be to highlight issues to be addressed and provide recommendations on the development and execution of the scientific work programme of IPBES. The Ramsar STRP Chair will prepare the first draft outline of an information paper for circulation to the CSAB members.

#### **4. Outcomes of the STRP16 meeting, Gland, February 2011**

9. The STRP16 meeting was briefed by Mr Ash of UNEP, and the STRP used this opportunity to raise a number of questions related to both the operational modalities of the IPBES and the development of its scientific work programme. Some of the questions and issues raised are covered in Annex 2, which was prepared for the Ramsar Secretary General prior to the UNEP GC meeting in February 2011.
10. The STRP agreed that:
  - the IPBES could potentially provide significant value and enhance our work and that of the Ramsar Convention as a whole;
  - the STRP should be involved in the consultative group in the lead-up to the first plenary of IPBES;
  - a Draft Resolution should be developed by the STRP and submitted to Ramsar COP11 regarding the IPBES development and its potential benefits for Ramsar, and including early recommendations from the STRP regarding STRP engagement in and linkages with IPBES processes in future; and
  - the STRP should prepare an information paper for the first IPBES plenary, setting out recommendations regarding future priorities for the work programme of IPBES; this could possibly be part of a joint submission to the IPBES plenary by the scientific advisory bodies of a number of the biodiversity-related MEAs. The STRP chair will coordinate the development of this information paper, through discussions on the STRP Support Service.

---

<sup>2</sup> See CSAB4 meeting report, [www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=CSAB-04](http://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=CSAB-04).

## **Annex 1**

### **Briefing and discussion note on IPBES (Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services)**

**Prepared for CSAB4 by Neville Ash, UNEP**

#### **Background**

IPBES builds on the outcomes of the consultation towards an international mechanism for scientific expertise on biodiversity (IMoSEB) and the global strategy on Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) follow-up, as well as the decision IX/15 of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD. UNEP has been facilitating an intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder process on IPBES since 2008, which has included three intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder consultation and negotiation meetings: Putrajaya, Malaysia, 10-12 November 2008; Nairobi, 5-9 October 2009; and Busan, Republic of Korea, 7-11 June 2010.

The main outcome of the Busan meeting was an agreement among Governments to establish IPBES. Governments also agreed on the scope, key guiding principles, as well as an overall area of focus of the platform (identification of key scientific information for policymakers, regular and timely assessments, policy support, prioritization of capacity building needs and catalyzing financing to address such needs). At the Busan meeting, Governments also recommended that the UNGA-65 should be invited to consider the Busan outcome and take appropriate action for establishing the platform. The report of the Busan meeting is available at [www.ipbes.net/3rd-meeting-on-ipbes/3rd-ipbes-meeting-documents.html](http://www.ipbes.net/3rd-meeting-on-ipbes/3rd-ipbes-meeting-documents.html)

The tenth Conference of the Parties to the CBD (Nagoya, Japan, 18-29 October 2010) subsequently adopted Decision X/11, welcoming the Busan outcome and encouraging UNGA-65 to consider the establishment of the platform at the earliest opportunity (available at [www.cbd.int/cop10/doc/](http://www.cbd.int/cop10/doc/))

In line with the above recommendations from Busan, CBD COP 10 and the decision SS.XI/4 of the UNEP Governing Council (2010), which requested the ED to convene the Busan meeting and to transmit the outcomes of the meeting to UNGA-65, the Busan outcome was submitted to UNGA-65 (in doc A/65/383).

On 20 December 2010, the GA adopted a resolution (A/RES/65/162), which, in OP17, “requests the United Nations Environment Programme, without prejudice to the final institutional arrangements for the intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services and in consultation with all relevant organizations and bodies, in order to fully operationalize the platform, to convene a plenary meeting providing for the full and effective participation of all Member States, in particular representatives from developing countries, to determine modalities and institutional arrangements for the platform at the earliest opportunity”.

In addition to the above, the following official decisions have also been adopted in relation to the Busan outcome:

- Decision 13/9 adopted at the thirteenth session of AMCEN, held in Bamako, 21-25 June 2010, welcoming and endorsing the Busan outcome;
- Decision made by the 185<sup>th</sup> session of the Executive Board of UNESCO, contained in the document 185 EX/43, noting the conclusion of the Busan meeting.

UNEP Governing Council (21-24<sup>th</sup> February 2011) will also consider IPBES in UNEP/GC.26/6 (available at [www.unep.org/gc/gc26/working-docs.asp](http://www.unep.org/gc/gc26/working-docs.asp)) and is anticipated to request to the ED, in consultation with UNSECO, FAO, UNDP and other relevant organizations and bodies to convene a first plenary meeting of IPBES.

#### **Issues for possible discussion at CSAB:**

- 1) **Consultative group for 1<sup>st</sup> IPBES Plenary.** In preparation for the 1<sup>st</sup> IPBES plenary meeting, UNEP will convene a UN and MEA consultation group, as requested by UNGA to plan for the 1<sup>st</sup> plenary meeting of IPBES. CSAB may wish to consider whether in addition to the Secretariats of the Conventions, whether Chairs of scientific bodies also wish to be members of that consultative group.
- 2) **Relationship of scientific subsidiary bodies to IPBES.** The first IPBES plenary will determine how the Platform can be operationalized to best meet the needs of governments, including through the MEAs. There is therefore the opportunity to inform the 1<sup>st</sup> plenary with the perspectives from CSAB on the needs and expectations of IPBES from MEA scientific subsidiary bodies. For example, CSAB might consider whether the MEAs might agree and propose a common procedure for interfacing with (i.e., putting requests and receiving information from) IPBES. This might include guidance on the most appropriate format by which MEAs would want to have results presented to them - for example through Millennium Ecosystem Assessment style MEA-specific syntheses.
- 3) **CSAB and IPBES Governance.** At the 1<sup>st</sup> plenary meeting, IPBES will consider rules and procedure, the structure of the Platform, and the composition of Governing bodies. CSAB might have views on the most beneficial involvement of Chairs of scientific subsidiary bodies in the governance options that will be considered (these are to be determined, but will be based on Consideration 4.3 in document UNEP/IPBES/3/2, available at [www.ipbes.net/3rd-meeting-on-ipbes/3rd-ipbes-meeting-documents.html](http://www.ipbes.net/3rd-meeting-on-ipbes/3rd-ipbes-meeting-documents.html))
- 4) **IPBES work programme.** CSAB may have views on the work programme of IPBES, which is unlikely to be discussed in detail at the 1<sup>st</sup> plenary, but on which guidance from MEAs would be helpful both for context at the 1<sup>st</sup> plenary and for subsequent discussion of IPBES. For example, CSAB may have perspectives on the most appropriate focus of assessments (global/regional/thematic focused on specific common issues across MEAs for example) to meet the assessment needs of MEAs, and recognising that the IPBES work programme will be more than assessment

activities, CSAB may have views on the relative focus of IPBES in order to meet the needs of the MEAs for identifying gaps in knowledge, supporting implementation through the development of tools and approaches, and for capacity building.

- 5) **Other considerations.** CSAB may wish to provide any other guidance to UNEP or the 1<sup>st</sup> IPBES Plenary, and may consider submitting the output of discussions on the above issues as an Information Document to the 1st plenary.

## **Annex 2**

### **Ramsar and IPBES**

#### **Note for the Ramsar Secretary-General Prepared by the STRP Chair, 19 February 2011**

1. An update on the establishment and further development of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) was provided to STRP16 by Mr Neville Ash of UNEP. The briefing note for this agenda item was also tabled at the CSAB4 meeting on 13 February and can be found at [www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/csab/csab-04/official/csab-04-briefing-note-ipbes-en.pdf](http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/csab/csab-04/official/csab-04-briefing-note-ipbes-en.pdf).
2. Participants at the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the CSAB also discussed IPBES and the potential future relationship between IPBES and the MEAs. The report of the CSAB4 meeting should be out shortly, but it was agreed there that following the discussion at STRP16 (which would also be attended by the SBSTTA Chair), the STRP Chair would circulate notes and feedback to the other scientific advisory bodies in order that they might consider developing a joint information paper from CSAB for the first plenary of IPBES.
3. The 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of the STRP agreed that:
  - a) the IPBES could potentially provide significant value and enhance our work and that of the Convention as a whole;
  - b) the STRP should be involved in the consultative group in the lead-up to the first plenary of IPBES, and
  - c) a Draft Resolution should be developed by the STRP and submitted to Ramsar COP11 regarding the IPBES development and its potential benefits for Ramsar, and including early recommendations from the STRP regarding STRP engagement in and linkages with IPBES processes in future;
  - d) the STRP should prepare an information paper for the first IPBES plenary, setting out some recommendations regarding future priorities for the work programme of IPBES, and this could possibly be part of a joint submission to the IPBES plenary by the scientific advisory bodies of a number of the biodiversity-related MEAs. The STRP chair will coordinate the development of this information paper, through discussions on the STRP Support Service.

4. Participants at the STRP16 meeting used the opportunity to raise a number of questions with Mr Neville Ash regarding IPBES. Since much of the detail of how IPBES will conduct its work has not yet been decided, the questions remain largely open. Since the report of the STRP16 meeting has not yet been finalized, the notes below do not necessarily constitute the agreed views of the STRP, but they do reflect issues which STRP might consider in an information note to the first IPBES plenary.
5. *Scientific data and information provided to IPBES*: how will IPBES decide what data and information to use in its assessments? While it is clearly essential that the assessments are credible and based on reliable information, if only peer-reviewed data and information are permitted then much valuable local knowledge as well as information in the “grey” literature might not be used. There need to be processes that can access the wealth of information held at subnational and local levels, without compromising the credibility of IPBES assessment reports.
6. *Emerging issues*: how will IPBES identify emerging issues? There needs to be a clear process for identifying emerging issues for scientific attention and, if they are considered to be priorities, then addressing them in a timely manner.
7. *Requests to IPBES for, e.g., thematic reviews or thematic assessments to meet Ramsar’s information needs*: the STRP needs to consider how we would define the scope and terms of reference for such reviews or assessments, and IPBES needs to have clear mechanisms for Ramsar STRP (and other MEA science advisory bodies) to submit such requests.
8. *Communication with policy makers*: it is important that IPBES provides syntheses of scientific information that can serve as a single source of credible information for policy makers. Policy makers currently lack a single authoritative source of policy-relevant scientific information on biodiversity and ecosystem services.
9. *Institutional knowledge*: how will IPBES address the problem of high turnover of people in policy-making positions? There is a need to consider how to support the maintenance of institutional knowledge (in-country).
10. *Cost of interfacing with IPBES*: while the benefits of interfacing with IPBES could be very significant for Ramsar and the STRP, it is also possible that the costs of this interfacing, in terms of STRP time and attention, could be high. The Draft Resolution to our COP11 on IPBES needs to point this out in order to ensure that adequate resources are provided to support STRP engagement with IPBES. A question was raised as to whether IPBES resources could be provided to support this kind of engagement by STRP (and other science advisory bodies), possibly as an aspect of IPBES capacity-building programmes (since the STRP will also need enhanced capacity to engage with IPBES).
11. *Languages*: what languages will be used in IPBES working processes ? Mr Ash responded that at least the official UN languages would probably be used.

12. *Regional vs thematic construct:* would the IPBES have a regional structure or be arranged to work on thematic basis ? Mr Ash replied that this still needs to be decided.
13. *Timing of IPBES products:* could these be linked to major policy events, such as COPs, targets, etc., to provide supporting information for the discussions at such policy events?
14. *Identifying Ramsar information needs in order to inform IPBES work programme:* the STRP should rapidly highlight some of our early information needs to inform development of the IPBES work programme and initial priorities. There are clear gaps in wetlands-related information which were highlighted by the Millennium Assessment. The draft Ramsar Data & Information Needs framework currently under development in STRP could provide a basis for recommendations on Ramsar information needs which could be addressed through IPBES, as could a concept document for the proposed State of the World's Wetlands reports. This should be part of the information paper for the IPBES plenary or could be addressed in the proposed IPBES Draft Resolution for Ramsar COP11.