



11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

“Wetlands: home and destination”

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Update on the establishment of the Intergovernmental Science- Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

1. This information note has been prepared by the Secretariat and the Chair of the STRP, Heather MacKay, who has been representing Ramsar interests in the IPBES process and meetings. It is intended to provide:
 - a) an update on the status of the process to establish and operationalize the IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services);
 - b) an overview of the next steps in this process and of some issues of particular relevance for Ramsar; and
 - c) attention to IPBES issues in COP11 documents, including an outline of the possible scope and content of a potential COP11 Draft Resolution on Ramsar's future engagement with the IPBES, should the Parties consider that such a Resolution might be desirable in light of the outcomes of the 2nd plenary for IPBES, which took place in April 2012.

Update on progress in the IPBES process

2. DOC.SC42-19-02, prepared for the 42nd meeting of the Standing Committee (2011), provides an overview of the preliminary stages of the IPBES process, and Ramsar's involvement in it, leading up to the first plenary meeting for the platform.
3. The first plenary meeting to determine modalities and institutional arrangements for an IPBES (Nairobi, October 2011) was intended to address more process-related aspects of IPBES operationalization, such as institutional structures and processes, rules of procedure, membership, and procedures for prioritizing requests to the Platform.
4. At the first plenary meeting (see the IPBES website for the meeting report (<http://www.ipbes.net/plenary-sessions/first-session-of-plenary.html>)), good progress was made in determining structures and modalities for the Platform, but final agreement was not reached on key aspects of the rules of procedure and membership. Decisions on these aspects will influence how the scientific work programme is defined and executed and in turn how the biodiversity-related conventions (including Ramsar) might best interface with

the IPBES for maximum synergy and benefit in implementing our convention mandates specifically, and in protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services generally. Statements made to the first plenary meeting in Nairobi by the STRP Chair and by the group of biodiversity-related conventions are appended to this note (Annex 1).

5. The second plenary meeting to determine modalities and institutional arrangements for an IPBES (Panama, April 2012) made further progress on establishing the functions, operating principles and institutional arrangements of the Platform, and rules of procedure, although some aspects of these processes remain to be finalized.
6. The meeting agreed that the seat of the IPBES Secretariat will be located in Bonn, Germany, and agreed an intersessional work programme to prepare for the first session of the IPBES Plenary, which is expected to be held in early 2013. The components of this intersessional work programme are summarized in an information note provided to the 16th meeting of the CBD SBSTTA, the text of which is provided in Annex 2 to this note, as is the text of a statement made to the second session for an IPBES made by the chairs of the scientific subsidiary bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions (CSAB), which includes the STRP Chair.
7. A joint statement of the biodiversity-related conventions was also made and is included in the full report of the meetings which is available at <http://www.ipbes.net/plenary-sessions/second-session-of-plenary.html>.
8. The Panama meeting established that the Plenary will be the Platform's decision-making body, with a Bureau overseeing administrative functions and a Multidisciplinary Expert Panel to carry out the scientific and technical functions. Initial membership of this Panel will be five members from each of the five United Nations regions, with the Chairs of the biodiversity and ecosystem services-related MEA scientific subsidiary bodies (including the STRP Chair) invited as observers.

Intersessional processes prior to the 1st plenary of IPBES (in early 2013)

9. A number of aspects of the intersessional processes established by the Panama meeting in April 2012 are relevant to MEAs including Ramsar, and the Interim IPBES Secretariat (at UNEP) has recently (21 June 2012) invited input from the Ramsar Convention and other MEAs on these points, in particular on:
 - i) the assessment catalogue that is being developed, to ensure that this includes relevant information from previous and ongoing assessment activities undertaken by and in support of MEAs;
 - ii) the draft document on elements of a conceptual framework that might be adopted to guide the activities of IPBES;
 - iii) identifying capacity building needs through reviewing comments to a draft information document being prepared on the capacity building needs identified in national reporting to MEAs. This document under development aims to summarize the capacity needs identified by countries in the latest round of national reports to various MEAs; and

- iv) suggestions on the process for receiving and prioritizing requests from governments and MEAs.
10. The STRP is being consulted concerning these intersessional inputs, the deadlines for some of which are short (mid-August 2012).
 11. It is still too early to provide specific recommendations on how the biodiversity-related conventions themselves and their subsidiary bodies, like the STRP, will interact with IPBES, how requests will be submitted by the conventions and considered by the IPBES plenary, and how we will contribute to the work of IPBES, but more clarity should emerge through the current intersessional processes and at the first plenary of the Platform in early 2013, when its conceptual framework and scientific work programme will be discussed. The work programme will cover four main areas: identification and prioritization of scientific information and knowledge needs, preparation of assessments, capacity building, and policy support.
 12. Although the IPBES has the potential to significantly strengthen science-policy interfaces related to biodiversity at all levels from global to local, it is important to recognize that within Ramsar, there are already science-policy interfaces at various levels. For example, the recent study on National Ramsar Committees (see http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-activities-nationalramsarcommittees/main/ramsar/1-63-516_4000_0_) suggests that these might operate as interfaces at national and subnational levels. While the effectiveness of these existing science-policy interfaces varies, depending on individual situations, such internal interfaces could usefully be examined with the intention of strengthening them and making them more effective while the IPBES gathers momentum.
 13. It is important for Ramsar to be part of this discussion on the IPBES work programme in order to ensure that water and wetlands are adequately addressed, to articulate to IPBES the needs of our policy makers and implementers for information on wetlands and wetland ecosystem services, and especially for information on drivers of changes in wetlands, in order to develop appropriate policy responses.
 14. It is the view of the STRP that the planned State of the World's Wetlands (SoWWs) assessments and the proposed Global Wetland Observing System (GWOS) provide key opportunities to collaborate with IPBES to deliver more than we could alone, and to deliver it to policy makers well beyond the wetlands sector. There is also significant potential for synergy with IPBES in capacity building for uptake and response to assessments, especially assessments carried out at subglobal and subregional levels.
 15. It is recognized that there have been, and will be, transaction costs for Ramsar associated with IPBES engagement. It will take time and effort particularly on the part of the STRP, for example in formulating terms of reference, assisting in execution of work and data provision, and reviewing outputs from IPBES. Contracting Parties may need to be involved in this scientific work as well, especially in accessing data related to wetlands from subregional, national and lower levels. However, the potential benefits for enhancing Convention implementation are likely to outweigh the costs, and it is worth being involved in the process now in order to be able to influence initial ideas and priorities for the IPBES work programme.

16. In addition, it may be necessary to consider and refine some of STRP's internal scientific procedures related to peer review and publication of information in order to meet IPBES requirements, which are likely to be similar to those of the IPCC as regards quality and credibility of data. To some degree this is already being addressed in the review of STRP's internal procedures for peer review, but these will be revisited once the rules for the IPBES have been settled.

Addressing Ramsar and STRP engagement in the IPBES during COP11

17. At present the Standing Committee has transmitted text concerning IPBES for Parties' consideration in one preambular and one operative paragraph in COP11 DR6 on "Partnerships and synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other institutions".
18. Following the second plenary for IPBES, the Interim IPBES Secretariat has suggested some amendments to these paragraphs to better and more accurately reflect the outcomes of that plenary, and for future Ramsar engagement in IPBES, and it may be appropriate to further elaborate aspects of those paragraphs.
19. At its 43rd meeting the Standing Committee also considered a recommendation from the STRP Chair that in addition a separate COP11 Draft Resolution on IPBES and Ramsar should be prepared, in order to highlight the importance of engagement with the IPBES, and also to provide clear guidance to the STRP and other bodies of the Convention regarding future engagement with the IPBES as it becomes fully operational.
20. The Standing Committee did not conclude whether or not to bring forward to COP11 a separate Draft Resolution on IPBES, but if the second IPBES plenary outcomes are considered sufficiently significant, under the COP Rules of Procedure such a Draft Resolution could be introduced to COP11 by the Conference Committee. It is noted that the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) at its COP10 in October 2011 adopted a specific Resolution on IPBES, and CBD SBSTTA16 is likewise transmitting a specific set of recommendations on IPBES for CBD COP11 consideration for adoption in October 2012.
21. Any specific COP11 Draft Resolution on Ramsar and IPBES should address two primary themes:
 - i) the more institutional or procedural aspects of communication and collaboration with various IPBES bodies (including the plenary, the working groups, and the possible scientific panel); and
 - ii) the identification of priority scientific tasks or issues on which we may wish to formulate requests to the IPBES for attention in its initial scientific work programme.
22. The DR could include text which, amongst other things:
 - i) welcomes the decision taken to establish the IPBES at the second plenary in April 2012;

- ii) recognizes the potential value of IPBES for enhancing implementation of the Convention at all levels;
- iii) welcomes the invitation by IPBES for the Chair of the STRP to participate as an observer in the IPBES Multidisciplinary Expert Panel;
- iv) requests the Secretariat and the STRP to continue their engagement with and advice to the IPBES process;
- v) highlights the importance of the Ramsar Sites Information Service in providing a key dataset on Ramsar Sites, recognizing that the revised Ramsar Information Sheet will provide a much better match to core wetland inventory fields and hence will greatly improve the analytical capabilities of the RSIS. However, this will depend to a large degree on Contracting Parties adopting the revised RIS and supporting the transition to the new RIS for all Ramsar Sites, as well as supporting the redevelopment of the RSIS to enable improved analyses and data and information sharing;
- vi) requests the STRP to assist in the formulation and submission of requests to IPBES for products (assessments, capacity building, reports) which could help Parties in implementation of the Convention, particularly in design and implementation of cross-sectoral policy responses to changes/loss of wetlands and wetland ecosystem services;
- vii) provides clear guidance on procedures within the Convention for formulation, approval and transmission of requests to the IPBES from Ramsar;
- viii) requests the STRP to advance work on the SoWWs and GWOS concepts as a matter of priority in order to ensure that they are included in early IPBES work programmes;
- ix) requests the STRP to work with the Secretariat, the CEPA Oversight Panel, and Contracting Parties to identify and articulate implementation needs at global, regional, and lower levels which could be met by IPBES products or by collaborating with IPBES; and
- x) requests the STRP Chair to continue to work with counterparts in other MEAs' scientific subsidiary bodies, through the CSAB, to help in formulating any joint MEA requests to IPBES.

Annex 1

Statements to the first plenary meeting of IPBES by Ramsar and by the group of biodiversity-related conventions

A. Statement from the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

Chair:

I'd like to share some ideas from Ramsar on how we think the IPBES work programme could complement our own science-policy work programme and hence strengthen Convention implementation. We hope that the delegates will find this useful in their deliberations this week.

The STRP is one partner in the existing science-policy interfaces within Ramsar, and part of our role is to work with our Parties to understand their policy support needs at subregional, national and even local levels, and then to provide the scientific advice and support to help them to develop and implement appropriate policy for the wise use of wetland ecosystems and their ecosystem services.

As an example of a high priority issue for Ramsar: the STRP is now working to design the scope and terms of reference for a proposed regular assessment of the State of the World's Wetlands and their ecosystem services. The aim is provide information on status and trends in wetland biodiversity and wetland ecosystem services, and on the drivers of change in wetland ecosystem services such as water use and land use. Many of these drivers operate at subregional scales and that is where the most effective policy interventions should be made. Hence our assessments will need to address subregional as well as regional and global levels. In addition, there is strong demand from our Parties for information on the values of wetland ecosystem services to help them in their policy implementation.

As we work with our Party governments to help them develop appropriate policy interventions on the basis of the knowledge contained in such an assessment of wetland ecosystems, then we also need to ensure that they have the capacity to do this and we try to find ways to help them build the capacity. So you can see that there is good complementarity with the suggested areas of work for the IPBES.

We alone are not able to access all the knowledge we need on wetlands and drivers of change to help our Parties, and thus we see collaboration with the IPBES as a key mechanism for helping us to deliver the information and knowledge our Parties need, to assist them in developing appropriate policy, and to build the capacity for countries to implement that policy. We trust that this complementarity and potential synergies can be reflected in the design and delivery of the IPBES work programme, and we are very interested in working with the IPBES to develop and implement its work programme.

Thank you.

B. Statement from the group of biodiversity-related conventions present at the meeting

This joint statement that was presented to the plenary by Shakeel Bhatti of ITPGRFA:

Mr Chair, Ladies and Gentleman

This statement is on behalf of CBD, CITES, CMS, ITPGRFA, Ramsar, and WHC.

Members of the Secretariats, and Chairs of scientific bodies, representing all six biodiversity-related Conventions have met together during this meeting. We all recognize the importance of IPBES for the implementation of the conventions, as well as the potential contribution of the Conventions to the work of IPBES. We note further that the governing bodies of some of these conventions have already encouraged the development of this process and have welcomed the Busan Outcome.

We note that the Busan Outcome, in paragraph 6(a), envisages a role for the Conventions in conveying requests from governments to IPBES and that a process to receive and prioritize requests should be established. We also note that paragraph 7(a) of the Busan Outcome calls for the Platform to collaborate with existing initiatives on biodiversity and ecosystem services, including multilateral environmental agreements, to fill gaps and build upon their work, while avoiding duplication.

The Conventions have an important role in setting the global agenda on biodiversity and ecosystem services. For example, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its 20 Aichi Targets provides a useful flexible framework for action by conventions and all stakeholders in this field. In addition, the scientific processes, using science to inform policy, under each of the Conventions may provide useful inputs to the work of IPBES. Finally, the work of IPBES at the sub-global level, and the implementation of the Conventions at the regional and national levels, can and should be mutually supportive, strengthening the application of science at these levels

For these reasons we believe that there should be strong linkages between the Platform and the Conventions.

It is important that the conventions can be represented by the secretariats and chairs of their scientific bodies in the plenary, and, as necessary in subsidiary bodies and/or through other consultative mechanisms. This should be taken into account as the principles and rules of the Platform are elaborated.

It is also important that there are clear mechanisms, in line with the Busan outcomes, that allow IPBES to be responsive to the need of governments as expressed through the conventions and allow the conventions to make contributions to the work of IPBES.

We stand ready to contribute, in due course and at the appropriate moment, with ideas and proposals on how this might be achieved. In doing so we will draw upon the experience of the relationship between the IPPC and the UNFCCC and its SBSTA, as well as other relevant experience.

Mr Chair, we believe that by working closely together, IPBES and the Conventions can support our common objectives of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and maintenance

of ecosystem services for human well-being and also, contribute to a more coherent approach to international environmental governance and scientific overview, as well as building effective science-policy interfaces for biodiversity and ecosystem services at all levels. We are committed to doing our part towards this end.

Thank you.

Annex 2

Further information concerning the second plenary for the IPBES

A. Text of Information Note summarizing second plenary outcomes provided to CBD SBSTTA16 (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/INF/40)

1. The second session of the plenary meeting to determine modalities and institutional modalities for an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services was held in Panama City, Panama, 16 – 21 April, 2012. This note provides an informal summary of the outcomes of the session for the information of the participants in the sixteenth session of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific technical and Technological Advice. It supplements the information provided in the note by the Executive Secretary on ways and means to improve the effectiveness of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/2). The official report of the session will be provided on the IPBES website.
2. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) was established as an independent intergovernmental body, by means of a resolution supported by more than ninety countries present at the session.
3. The functions, operating principles and institutional arrangements of the Platform were elaborated, although some details are yet to be finalized.
4. In line with the Busan outcome, the functions of the Platform may be summarized as (i) identifying scientific needs and catalysing knowledge generation, (ii) performing regular and timely assessments of knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystem services and their inter-linkages, (iii) identifying policy-relevant tools and methodologies, and (iv) supporting and catalysing capacity building.
5. The Plenary will be the Platform's decision-making body, open to membership from States members of the United Nations. A Bureau, comprising the Chair and four Vice-Chairs and five additional officers will oversee the administrative functions, while a Multidisciplinary Expert Panel will carry out the scientific and technical functions, initially comprised of five members from each of the five United Nations regions, and with the Chairs of the biodiversity and ecosystem services -related MEA scientific subsidiary bodies to be invited as observers.
6. It was agreed that the seat of the Secretariat will be located in Bonn, Germany.

7. The rules of procedures for the platform's plenary were also determined, although many elements remain to be finalized. Rules of procedures based on those of UNEP Governing Council will be used for the first meeting of the IPBES Plenary in those remaining areas. The first meeting of the IPBES Plenary is expected to determine arrangements for the Secretariat, the work-programme and the budget. The first session of the IPBES Plenary is also due to decide on the link of the Platform with the United Nations system.
8. In preparation for the first session of the IPBES Plenary, an inter-sessional work programme was agreed including the following elements:
 - a) Preparation of a catalogue of assessments, and a review of these assessments highlighting the implementation of capacity-building activities, the use of conceptual frameworks, the scope of assessments, the experiences with the integration of knowledge systems, the use of scenarios and other tools, the lessons learned with respect to achievement of the impact of assessments, and the gaps in knowledge and coverage of assessments;
 - b) Preparation of a draft conceptual framework;
 - c) Further consideration of capacity-building needs and suggestions for the activities and partnerships that might address those needs;
 - d) Consideration, based on submissions from Governments, multilateral environmental agreements and other entities, of the process by which requests might be submitted to the Plenary of the Platform, and on the process by which the plenary might prioritize such requests,
 - e) Consideration, based on submissions from Governments, multilateral environmental agreements and other entities, of the process that should be followed for scoping potential assessments and other Platform activities once they have been prioritized by the Plenary of the Platform, and on the expected outputs of such a process.
9. The biodiversity-related conventions represented at the session, including the CBD Secretariat, indicated their interest and willingness to contribute to these inter-sessional activities. A joint statement of the biodiversity-related conventions is included in the report of the session.

B. Statement made by the chairs of the scientific subsidiary bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions (CSAB)

The chairs of the scientific advisory bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions¹, meeting together with the Secretariats of the Conventions, at their 5th meeting in Dublin reiterate their support for the establishment of the IPBES, and highlight again the potential for the IPBES, once operational, to contribute to increasing synergies amongst the conventions and to achieving the conservation and sustainable use of and equitable benefits from biodiversity.

We note with satisfaction the positive progress towards operationalization of the IPBES since the Busan meeting, and are pleased to see that the roles and needs of the Conventions are

¹ The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar), the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (WHC) and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA).

reflected in several preparatory documents for the Panama IPBES meeting. As evidenced in several recent decisions, conclusions or reports of various governing bodies and subsidiary bodies (see document UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/INF/2), the conventions are engaging strongly with the IPBES establishment process.

The Conventions have an important role in setting the global agenda on biodiversity and ecosystem services, and in that context their governing bodies are key policy-making bodies which can direct requests to and benefit from IPBES. The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi targets provide a common “currency” around which the conventions can co-ordinate and collaborate. The scientific advisory bodies of the Conventions can provide useful and policy-relevant information to the work of the IPBES and their decision-making can be assisted by IPBES outputs. The work of the IPBES at the sub-global level and the implementation of the conventions at regional and national levels can and should be mutually supportive, strengthening the application of science at these levels and thereby implementation of the conventions.

Without prejudice to the possible efforts by any Convention to develop a particular model for engaging individually with the IPBES in future or governments’ negotiations on the details of the institutional structures and procedures within the IPBES, and noting that the Conventions do not all have the same mandates from their governing bodies, we wish to make the following contributions to the discussions in Panama in the hope that we can contribute to the effective operation of the IPBES in future:

- The Conventions’ governing and subsidiary bodies, including their scientific advisory bodies (and their associated agreements), can provide knowledge networks, information and data and expertise.
- The scientific advisory bodies and secretariats, either individually or through the CSAB, could potentially:
 - facilitate identification of priority issues of common concern which might become joint proposals/requests from Convention governing bodies to the IPBES;
 - identify issues which are in the Conventions’ respective work programmes and coordinate those issues which have aspects that are common to several Conventions;
 - assist in scoping of responses by IPBES to requests from Convention governing bodies helping to avoid duplication and to enhance collaboration;
 - participate in reviews of IPBES products.
- It is important to ensure that the process for receiving and prioritizing requests allows clear, timely and predictable responses to requests from the Conventions.
- The IPBES needs to recognize the special role of Conventions (and their associated agreements) in its work programme, since they already represent views of Contracting Party governments. The IPBES should also recognize the roles of the Conventions as policy-making and policy implementation bodies.

- The IPBES should recognize the roles of Conventions as source of distinctive scientific knowledge and advice to the Contracting Parties, through the work of their scientific bodies.
- The IPBES meeting in Panama should give particular consideration to and agree on how Conventions (secretariats/governing bodies as well as science advisory bodies) are represented in or participate in different bodies of IPBES, including plenary and subsidiary bodies. The meeting should also give consideration to how CSAB or the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions (BLG) could participate in the different bodies of the IPBES.
- IPBES focal points at national level (if they are established) should co-ordinate with Convention focal points at national level.
- Capacity building is an important activity for the Conventions already, especially at subglobal level, and in its work programme on capacity building the IPBES should work closely with existing Convention processes for capacity building to ensure coherence and avoid duplication.
- A more general point is that IPBES must draw existing processes together to improve consistency and complementarity, and work to avoid introducing another level of complexity to existing Convention processes and activities.

The chairs of the scientific advisory bodies of the Conventions have agreed to convey the following suggestions to their governing bodies.

We note that it is especially important for delegates representing their governments at IPBES meetings, including the IPBES plenary to co-ordinate with focal points of the Conventions in-country, to ensure that the needs of the individual Conventions at national level are adequately reflected and considered in the IPBES discussions. This is of particular significance in preparation for the Panama meeting, but should be ongoing in future.

We also commit to facilitating discussions within the processes of the various Conventions with a view to;

- a) giving consideration to the internal procedures (which may be similar across Conventions) for preparation and submission of requests individually to the IPBES, especially to clarify the roles of their governing bodies and their scientific bodies; and
- b) how they prepare and submit joint requests to IPBES on issues of common concern/interest, and what roles the Secretariats, the BLG and the CSAB can play in developing joint requests to the IPBES. We are committed to working with the Convention secretariats to enhance the contribution of the CSAB and the individual scientific advisory bodies of the Conventions in order for them to interface as effectively as possible with the IPBES work programme.