

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)  
41<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee  
Kobuleti, Georgia, 26 April – 1 May 2010

**DOC. SC41-27**

Agenda item 17

## **Progress and advice on IPBES**

**Action requested:** The Standing Committee is invited to note the progress on IPBES and to advise on how the position of the Convention can be conveyed in ongoing deliberations related to IPBES and particularly at the 3<sup>rd</sup> intergovernmental and stakeholder meeting on IPBES, scheduled for 7-11 June 2010.

### **Background**

1. The IPBES process started with consultations towards an International Mechanism Of Scientific Expertise on Biodiversity (IMOSEB), a concept that was initiated at the International Conference on “Biodiversity: Science and Governance” in January 2005, Paris, France. The consultative process began officially in February 2006, with the first International Steering Committee (IST) meeting and the appointment of an Executive Committee. From the outset, this consultative process was a broad, multidisciplinary exploratory process, involving a large number of stakeholders, including an important political and media audience.
2. Two major steps were taken from 2006 to 2007: 1) Case studies were conducted on the interface between science and policy, and 2) targeted and regional consultations were undertaken in 2007, covering six continents and involving 300 participants representing 40 international/regional organizations from 70 countries. The IST met a second time in November 2007, in Montpellier, France, to formulate recommendations for an IMOSEB, according to the results of the consultations. The major recommendation of the IST was that any new body would be intergovernmental with scientific credibility, political legitimacy, and relevance, supported and building upon networks of scientist and biodiversity knowledge holders to meet the users’ needs identified during the consultation. The IST also recommended ensuring interaction with other ongoing processes, such as the Global Strategy of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) follow-up, and convening a meeting under the auspices of UNEP in 2008 to launch the process. A first joint meeting “IMOSEB-MA follow up: Strengthening the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Interface on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services” took place in March 2008 to develop a common approach.

### **Progress made so far in the IPBES process, including the joint contribution of the Ramsar Secretariat and the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)**

3. The key output of the meeting in March 2008 was a concept note, prepared by UNEP, detailing the needs and rationale for an intergovernmental multi-stakeholder platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services based on a request from the international science committee of the IMOSEB process and the partners of the Millennium Ecosystem

Assessment follow-up strategy. The document was made available as an information document to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its ninth meeting, held in May 2008.

### **First Consultations led by UNEP**

4. The consultation towards an international mechanism for scientific expertise on biodiversity and the global strategy on Millennium Ecosystem Assessment follow-up both reflect a general agreement on the need for an Intergovernmental science-policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). This need was further strengthened by decision IX/15 of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD, by which the Parties welcomed the agreement of the Executive Director of UNEP to convene an ad hoc open ended intergovernmental multi-stakeholder meeting to consider establishing an efficient international science-policy interface on biodiversity, ecosystem services, and human well-being.
5. Based on the comments received from governments and organizations attending the 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the CBD COP, the concept note was revised and sent to all countries for review. An open peer review process was undertaken electronically for six weeks. In total, 588 comments were received from 30 countries and 27 organizations. The concept note was revised accordingly<sup>1</sup> for consideration at the first ad hoc intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting on an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services, which was held in Putrajaya, Malaysia, from 10 to 12 November 2008.

### **First Contribution of the Ramsar Secretariat to this process**

6. In October 2009, the Ramsar Secretary General attended the first informal meeting on IPBES, in Barcelona, Spain, during the IUCN World Conservation Congress. Subsequently, written input was made from the Ramsar Secretariat in the review of the concept note prepared by UNEP. The Deputy Secretary General and the Vice-Chair of the Ramsar STRP attended the first IPBES meeting in Malaysia, immediately after the Ramsar COP10.

### **Key results of the first IPBES meeting <sup>2</sup>**

7. Participants generally agreed on the need to strengthen the science-policy interface and recommended that the UNEP Executive Director should report to the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its 25<sup>th</sup> session on the outcome of the meeting, and that the Governing Council should request the Executive Director to convene a second such meeting. The Chair recommended that a gap analysis on existing science-policy interfaces should be undertaken and that a preliminary report should be

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<sup>1</sup> Concept note on IPBES for the 1st meeting in Nov 2008  
[http://ipbes.net/Documents/ConceptNote\\_en.pdf](http://ipbes.net/Documents/ConceptNote_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Report of IPBES1 meeting Putrajaya Nov 2008  
[http://ipbes.net/Documents/IPBES\\_meeting\\_Report\\_UNEP\\_IPBES\\_1\\_6%20\\_en.pdf](http://ipbes.net/Documents/IPBES_meeting_Report_UNEP_IPBES_1_6%20_en.pdf)

made available at the 25<sup>th</sup> session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum.

### **First Decision of the UNEP Governing Council on IPBES**

8. The UNEP Governing Council adopted decision 25/10, by which it called for the Executive Director to undertake a further process to explore ways and means to strengthen the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development, aiming to report on progress at the special session on biodiversity of the 65<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly and other relevant meetings. Specifically, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to convene a second intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting in 2009 following the completion of the full gap analysis on existing interfaces on biodiversity and ecosystem services.

### **Second input from the Ramsar Secretariat**

9. On 7 April 2009, a meeting was organized by UNEP regarding the preparations for the second Ad hoc Intergovernmental and Multi-Stakeholder Meeting on IPBES. The Ramsar Secretary General attended the meeting and made comments on the gap analysis. During this meeting, UNEP invited two members of the Biodiversity-related Conventions Liaison Group (BLG) to play an active part in the informal advisory group being established ahead of this second meeting.
10. The 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Biodiversity-related Conventions Liaison Group (BLG), Paris, 9 April 2009, made the following decision: Executive Secretaries of CBD and Ramsar Secretary General are appointed to represent the BLG in the informal advisory group on the preparation of the second meeting on IPBES.
11. From March to June 2009, governments and organizations were invited to provide comments on the preliminary gap analysis. In total, 788 comments from 54 respondents, including the Ramsar Secretariat, were received and incorporated into the full gap analysis report, which was considered at the second meeting.

### **First contribution of the STRP in IPBES process**

12. A meeting of the informal consultative group on IPBES was held on 4 October 2009, in Nairobi, Kenya; the Chairperson of the Ramsar STRP represented the Ramsar Convention.

### **Joint inputs from the Ramsar Secretariat and the Ramsar STRP**

13. The Secretary General and the Chairperson of the STRP attended the second meeting of IPBES in Nairobi, from 5 to 9 October 2009<sup>3</sup>.

### **Main aspects of the joint inputs from the Ramsar Secretariat and the STRP during the second IPBES meeting**

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<sup>3</sup> Report of IPBES2 meeting Nairobi Oct 2009 <http://www.ipbes.net/en/2ndMeeting/index.asp>

### **Findings and needs as identified in the gap analysis**

14. We gave our approval to the following findings of the gap analysis:
- “A strengthened science-policy interface is needed with scientific independence (credibility, relevance and legitimacy); knowledge generation (collaboration and coordination for common and shared knowledge bases); knowledge assessments (regular and timely assessments to generate and disseminate policy relevant but not policy prescriptive advice with full and equal involvement of experts from all regions of the world); knowledge use (support for policy development and implementation); and 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).”
  - “The science-policy interface could, at least in part, be improved by strengthening existing mechanisms, but that a new mechanism building upon existing and strengthened mechanisms could potentially add significant value in areas in which strengthening was inadequate.”
  - “No intergovernmental mechanism currently exists to meet all the science policy needs of the multiple multilateral environmental agreements and processes in the field of biodiversity and ecosystem services. “

### **Improved collaboration and coordination to generate knowledge for a common and shared knowledge base**

15. We acknowledged the urgent need to strengthen the generation of knowledge at the national, regional and global levels, building upon existing scientific networks, including the Ramsar STRP.

### **Need for regular and timely assessments to generate and disseminate policy relevant and not policy prescriptive information**

16. We acknowledged the need to provide independent, legitimate, relevant and credible scientific assessments and information to policymakers in the field of biodiversity and ecosystem services and to the broader development community.
17. We strongly recommended that the assessments should be demand driven, based on problem identification and user needs, including the needs of decision makers, all relevant multilateral environmental agreements (e.g., the six biodiversity-related conventions – including the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the Convention on Migratory Species, the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar), and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, as well as the Convention to Combat Desertification) and United Nations agencies;

18. We recognized the need to incorporate all forms of knowledge, including indigenous and traditional knowledge; cover all temporal (past, present and future) and spatial scales (local, subregional, regional and global); use a common conceptual framework and methodologies; and be interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary. Assessments should tackle thematic and emerging issues; complement, rather than duplicate, existing assessments; learn from the experiences of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and also other international assessment processes, such as the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, the Global Biodiversity Outlook, the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development and the “assessment of assessments” of the state of the marine environment; consider value-related and social and economic aspects; and identify knowledge gaps.
19. We recognized that there is a need to agree on processes to approve the governance structure and scope of such assessments; the nomination and selection of authors and review editors; and the peer review, approval, and outreach and communication processes. The financial and human resource needs for such assessments should be acknowledged and met. Assessments needed to be translated into a language that could be understood and used by end users, including local communities.

**Support policy implementation by providing scientific support in the form of decision-support tools and methodologies**

20. We acknowledged the need to support policy formulation and implementation (especially for the six biodiversity-related conventions and the Convention to Combat Desertification).
21. We also recognized that it is necessary to broaden the client and user base of scientific information to include governments, United Nations organizations, civil society, the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

**Awareness-raising campaigns for the general public are also needed**

22. Access to and use of knowledge, which should be policy-relevant and not policy prescriptive, was seen as critically important. It is also important, upon request, to develop tools and methodologies to assist policy formulation, e.g., sub-global assessments with the involvement of end users; multi-criteria decision analysis tools; cost benefit analyses; and valuation methodologies for ecosystem services. It was considered vital for the knowledge base to be interpreted for users.

**Areas where the Ramsar Secretariat and the STRP need guidance from the Standing Committee to convey the Ramsar view at the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the IPBES process**

23. A number of documents are currently being prepared for the 3<sup>rd</sup> IPBES meeting – they are primarily intended to provide more detailed background information on options related to different aspects of a proposed IPBES, in order to assist delegations in reaching agreement on the key decisions listed above. A list of these documents with brief descriptions is provided in the table below. It appears that the information documents for the 3<sup>rd</sup> IPBES meeting will be ready for circulation to governments towards the end of April 2010.

24. The following key decisions are likely to be opened for consideration at the 3<sup>rd</sup> IPBES meeting:
- i) Should an IPBES be established?
  - ii) What should be the scope of IPBE ?
  - ii) Legal status
  - iv) Plenary functions
  - v) Executive body
  - vi) Working groups
  - vii) Secretariat
  - viii) Program of work
  - ix) Funding modalities
  - x) Selection criteria, nomination and selection process for chairs
25. Other decisions are listed that could be made at the first plenary meeting of IPBES if established:
- i) Roles of scientific organizations, UN agencies, MEAs, NGOs, private sector
  - ii) Selection of authors
  - iii) Peer-review process
  - iv) Report approval process
26. Whatever the outcomes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> IPBES meeting, they are likely to have significant implications for the Ramsar Convention, since an effective IPBES could potentially help us to achieve much greater synergies in policy, planning and implementation related to biodiversity and ecosystem services, and therefore in ensuring the wise use of wetlands and their biodiversity as well.
27. While many Ramsar Contracting Parties are likely to send delegations to the 3<sup>rd</sup> IPBES meeting, the Ramsar Convention itself is included in the IPBES process as a stakeholder and will be represented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> IPBES meeting by the Secretary General and the STRP Chair. Hence we have an opportunity to provide some inputs directly into the process as well as through our Contracting Parties.
28. In order to make the most of this opportunity to establish an effective global science-policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services, we invite Standing Committee to consider the following:
- Contracting Parties should be encouraged to include their Ramsar Administrative Authorities and national focal points in their in-country preparations for the 3<sup>rd</sup> IPBES meeting, and to include Ramsar AAs in their delegations if possible.
  - The Secretariat and the STRP will review the documents for the 3<sup>rd</sup> IPBES meeting as soon as they become available and prepare a short briefing paper on the various options associated with the key decisions, including the advantages and disadvantages, from the point of view of the Ramsar Convention. We will endeavour to provide an early draft of this briefing paper at SC41 for discussion.

Information documents currently in preparation for 3 <sup>rd</sup> IPBES meeting	Description
Working document on key decisions	Sets out the key decisions that will need to be made at the 3 <sup>rd</sup> and final IPBES meeting, with the options for each decision included. Based on the discussions and outcomes of the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> meetings.
Assessment landscape (Information Document)	Review of a selection of assessments related to biodiversity and ecosystem services, in order to provide lessons that may be relevant in the design and implementation of future assessments. Intended to facilitate further discussion on the proposed IPBES and its potential role in producing or contributing to assessments for biodiversity and ecosystem services.
Indicators (Information Document)	There is a need for more integrated quantitative models, scenarios and indicators that will aid understanding of not only biodiversity and ecosystem services, but also the relevance of biodiversity and ecosystem services to human well-being;
Capacity building analysis (Information Document)	Numerous institutions and processes are helping to build capacity to use science effectively in decision-making at all levels. Further efforts, however, are required to integrate multiple disciplines and knowledge systems to produce relevant knowledge effectively; to translate knowledge into policy action and to coordinate these processes; and to build the capacities of developing countries to use science more effectively in decision-making and to participate fully in the science-policy dialogue.
Options and criteria for selecting the Secretariat (Information Document)	Describes the likely functions of a Secretariat, and sets out options for establishment, location and operation of a Secretariat for the proposed IPBES.
IPCC background document (Information Document)	Describes the IPCC <i>modus operandi</i> , which was discussed at IPBES2 as one option and a potential model for the proposed IPBES.