

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)  
43<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee  
Gland, Switzerland, 31 October - 4 November 2011

DOC. SC43-19 Add.1

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

**Secretariat Note.** This information note has been prepared for Standing Committee consideration by the Chair of the STRP, Heather MacKay, who has been representing Ramsar interests in the IPBES process and meetings.

**Action requested:** The Standing Committee is invited to:

- take note of the information contained herein;
- endorse the suggestions for the scope and content of the proposed COP11 DR and provide comments on additional issues which might be addressed in preparation of the DR;
- approve the recommendation that the DR should be prepared immediately after the second plenary meeting of the IPBES (scheduled for 16-21 April 2012), and should be considered at the 44th meeting of the Standing Committee in June 2012.

1. This note provides the Standing Committee with:
  - (a) an update on the status of the process to establish and operationalize the IPBES (Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services);
  - (b) an overview of the next steps in this process and some issues of particular relevance for Ramsar; and
  - (c) suggestions for the scope and content of a proposed COP11 Draft Resolution on Ramsar's future engagement with the IPBES.
2. The note informs Standing Committee discussion regarding a possible Draft Resolution for COP11 concerning Ramsar's future engagement with the IPBES (as referred to in DOC.SC43-16, paragraph 3 on page 2).

### Update on progress in the IPBES process

3. The document presented to SC42 provides a more detailed overview of the IPBES process leading up to the first plenary meeting of the platform. See DOC.SC42-10-02.
4. The first plenary meeting of the 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. The second plenary, scheduled for April 2012, will address the actual content of the initial IPBES scientific work programme.

5. 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 annexed to this document.
6. Accordingly, it is still too early to provide specific recommendations on how the biodiversity-related conventions themselves and their subsidiary bodies (e.g. 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 at the second plenary meeting.
7. 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, we already have 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](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.

### **Next steps in the process of operationalizing the IPBES**

8. It is expected that at the second plenary meeting of IPBES in April 2012 the remaining institutional and procedural issues will be resolved and attention will then focus on the initial content of the scientific work programme of the platform. The work programme will cover four main areas: identification and prioritisation of scientific information and knowledge needs, preparation of assessments, capacity building, and policy support).
9. 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.
10. 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 assessments.

11. We recognize that there will be transaction costs 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 too, 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.
12. In addition, we may need to consider and refine some of our 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 we will revisit these once the rules for the IPBES have been settled.

#### **Suggested scope and content of COP11 DR on IPBES**

13. 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 both as it becomes fully operational and once it has matured, the STRP recommends that a Draft Resolution on this topic be submitted to COP11, but that the DR be prepared only after the second plenary meeting of the IPBES in April 2012. We offer here some suggestions regarding the possible scope and content of a DR.
14. A Draft Resolution on Ramsar and IPBES would need to 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.
15. The DR could include text which, amongst other things:
  - (i) Recognizes the potential value of IPBES to enhance implementation of the convention at all levels
  - (ii) 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 redevelopment of the RSIS to enable improved analyses.

- (iii) requests STRP to assist in the formulation and submission of requests to IPBES for products (assessments, capacity building, reports) which could help our 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;
- (iv) provides clear guidance on procedures within the Convention for formulation, approval and transmission of requests to the IPBES from Ramsar;
- (v) requests STRP to advance work on the SoWWs and GWOS concepts as matter of priority in order to ensure they are included in early IPBES work programme;
- (vi) requests STRP to work with Secretariat, CEPA 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.

#### **Suggested timelines for preparation of a Draft Resolution on IPBES for COP11**

16. Between now and April 2012:

- i. Take comments at SC43 and afterwards via email regarding the scope and content of the proposed DR;
- ii. Continue discussion on the STRP Support Service to gather additional comments and recommendations for the content of the proposed DR;
- iii. Develop concept notes on SOWWs and GWOS as possible annex to the DR;
- iv. Collaborate with the Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies (CSAB) of the biodiversity-related conventions to prepare a joint information paper for the second IPBES plenary meeting.

17. After the second IPBES plenary meeting in April 2012:

- i. prepare a firstdraft of the resolution;
- ii. circulate to the STRP for comment and finalization;
- iii. circulate the DR to the Standing Committee by the end of May;
- iv. at the 44<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee in June 2012, request the Standing Committee's approval to transmit the DR to COP11.

**Annex: 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 ITPGPRFA:

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.