

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
46th Meeting of the Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland, 8-12 April 2013

DOC. SC46-3

Matters arising from decisions of 44th and 45th meetings of the Standing Committee and Resolution XI.6

Outcomes of the IPBES 1st plenary

Action requested. The Standing Committee is invited to note the recent progress made in the implementation of its decisions and COP11 Resolution XI.6 with regard to the IPBES and to consider the next steps on these matters.

Ramsar engagement with IPBES prior to the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention (COP11)

1. At the first session of the plenary meeting to determine modalities and institutional arrangements for an “Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services” (IPBES) (Nairobi, October 2011), the secretariats and chairs of scientific bodies of the six biodiversity-related conventions presented a joint statement which, *inter alia*, drew attention to the role of the conventions in conveying requests from governments to IPBES and proposed that the conventions be represented in IPBES bodies (http://www.cites.org/eng/news/sundry/2011/Joint_statement_IPBES.pdf).
2. The final report of the Nairobi meeting reflected the participants’ discussions on the functions and operating principles of the platform, the functions and structures of bodies that might be established under IPBES, and the process and elements that might be considered in selecting the host institution or institutions and the physical location of the platform’s secretariat.
3. At the second session of the plenary meeting to determine modalities and institutional arrangements for an IPBES (Panama City, April 2012), the Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies (CSAB) submitted a Joint Statement (UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/INF16). In addition, the secretariats and chairs of the scientific bodies of the six biodiversity-related conventions also submitted a joint statement which, *inter alia*, welcomed the establishment of IPBES and recognized its potential to contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of global biodiversity as well as to the implementation of the conventions. As a general outcome of the Panama meeting, participating States adopted a resolution establishing IPBES as an independent intergovernmental body. The resolution and its appendices (i.e., on the functions, operating principles, and institutional arrangements of the Platform and the rules of procedure for the plenary of the Platform), as well as the intersessional work agreed by participating States, are contained in the report of that meeting, <http://www.ipbes.net/previous-ipbes-meetings/second-session-of-plenary.html>.

Relevant decisions of the Ramsar Standing Committee

4. At its 44th meeting (Bucharest, July 2012), the Standing Committee considered the Convention's progress with and engagement in IPBES, and through Decision SC44-6 the Committee "agreed to invite a drafting group comprising the USA, Denmark, the STRP Chair, and Dave Pritchard, and any other interested Parties, to develop suitable text on Ramsar's engagement with the IPBES process and make a recommendation to the Conference Committee."

Consideration of IPBES at Ramsar COP11

5. During COP11, Parties considered the draft IPBES text prepared by the drafting group, and determined to incorporate IPBES texts into Resolution XI.6 on *Partnerships and synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other institutions*. For ease of reference, the relevant portions of this Resolution are provided as Annex I to this note.

Activities concerning IPBES undertaken since Ramsar COP11

6. In accordance with Resolution XI.6, the Ramsar Secretary General and the outgoing Vice-Chair of the STRP, Ms. Rebecca D'Cruz, attended the first session of the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES-1) from 21-26 January 2013 in Bonn, Germany. It was an opportunity to meet and interact with over 500 participants representing IPBES member and non-member governments, UN organizations and conventions, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and various stakeholder groups.
7. Important exchanges were made by the Ramsar representatives, specifically with the representatives of the secretariats and the scientific bodies of the other five biodiversity-related conventions: the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and the World Heritage Convention.
8. Collectively, the secretariats and the chairs of the scientific bodies of biodiversity-related conventions conveyed a unified statement to the IPBES 1st Plenary, which is provided as Annex II to this note.

Current issues concerning future engagement with IPBES

9. Despite the clear message sent to IPBES by Ramsar Contracting Parties at COP11 through Resolution XI.6 as well through similar decisions from the other biodiversity-related conventions, the voice of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) remains weak in the debate. The only way to address this challenge is through the voices of the representatives of the governments which are Contracting Parties to the conventions and are committed to using all available tools, including IPBES, to employ the conventions fruitfully as frameworks for effective scientific knowledge and policies that support sustainable development.

10. Although the Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions will participate in the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) as observers, and though the convention secretariats have been afforded automatic observer status in the Plenary, the reality is that this observer status is not commensurate with the importance of MEAs in the work of IPBES.
11. Through the Standing Committee, the Ramsar Secretariat respectfully requests the full support of Contracting Parties so that in the future IPBES members could consider some means to ensure effective consultation between the convention secretariats and the Bureau – perhaps drawing upon the established practice under IPCC. This might be an element of the strategic partnership with MEAs to be developed in the future.
12. One encouraging sign from IPBES is the fact that its procedures recognize the challenges that timing of IPBES submissions may pose for the conventions, given that each convention has its own timetables and decision-making processes. In this regard, we appreciate the flexibility that has been afforded to allow relevant input from the conventions. IPBES members – and their representatives in the governing bodies of the conventions – might wish to consider developing further practical means to streamline these processes and facilitate the communication between the Platform and the conventions at the levels of governing bodies, scientific bodies, and secretariats.
13. From the outcomes of the first session of the IPBES Plenary, however, it remains unclear the extent to which IPBES will accept requests for assessments directly from MEAs to be included in its initial 2014-2018 work plan, rather than directly from a government or governments.
14. All secretariats and scientific bodies of biodiversity-related conventions are keen to work with the IPBES Secretariat and Panel to provide inputs to the intersessional process in line with the procedures established. The different aspects of those intersessional processes, and their timelines, leading up to the second session of the IPBES plenary anticipated for December 2013 can be found at <http://www.ipbes.net/plenary/intersessional.html>. These include a meeting of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) tentatively scheduled for June 2013, workshops on the IPBES conceptual framework, and working with different knowledge systems.
15. In addition, there is an opportunity (until 5 May 2013) for the submission of requests from IPBES members, as well as for inputs and suggestions from other stakeholders for submission of requests on scientific and technical matters that require the Platform's attention.
16. At its 17th meeting in late February 2013, the Ramsar STRP considered two aspects of its role in relation to IPBES, as indicated in Resolution XI.6 Annex 2:
 - i) aspects of tasks in its 2013-2015 Work Plan which might be appropriate to transmit to IPBES for consideration in establishing its work plan. The Panel determined that the periodic "State of the World's Wetlands and their ecosystem services" reporting task and aspects of its ecosystem service assessment task, including such assessment for Ramsar Sites, would be relevant; and

- ii) the preparation of interim guidelines on processes for formulation, approval and transmission of requests from Ramsar to IPBES. The Panel considered that, pending clarification as to whether IPBES will receive such requests directly from MEA bodies, it is premature to begin developing such internal guidelines, and it will keep this under review in the coming months.
17. In line with decisions of the Conferences of the Parties, the secretariat and the STRP are seeking guidance from the Standing Committee in order to address the issues raised in paragraphs 9-16 above and thus facilitate the preparation of inputs to IPBES-2.

Annex I

COP11 Resolution XI.6 text concerning engagement with the IPBES

17. WELCOMING the establishment of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), EXPRESSING APPRECIATION to the Ramsar Secretariat and the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel for their contributions to the planning and preparatory processes to establish IPBES, and ACKNOWLEDGING the potential for IPBES to serve as a mechanism to strengthen the science-policy interface with respect to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including wetland biodiversity and ecosystem services, and to make information available to the Ramsar Convention and its Contracting Parties to support decision-making related to implementation; . . .
29. EXPRESSES APPRECIATION to the Ramsar Secretariat and the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel for their participation in the IPBES process, ACCEPTS the invitation by IPBES for the Chair of the STRP to participate as an observer in the IPBES Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, and REQUESTS the Secretariat and the Chair of the STRP to continue to engage in the future IPBES process and explore further ways of collaboration as appropriate;
30. INVITES IPBES to address science-policy linkages relating to conservation and wise use of wetlands and, when establishing and implementing its modalities and work programme, to take into account the needs of the Ramsar Convention and its Contracting Parties by integrating scientific, technical and technological information relevant to the Convention;
31. REQUESTS the Contracting Parties, the Standing Committee, the Secretariat and the STRP to implement the actions set out in Annex 2 of this Resolution;
32. INVITES Contracting Parties to provide relevant expertise to IPBES and IPCC to help in developing information on wetlands.

Annex 2 of Resolution XI.6

Ramsar preparation and engagement with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

1. The Busan Outcome states: “Focusing on government needs and based on priorities established by the plenary, the platform should respond to requests from Governments, including those conveyed to it by multilateral environmental agreements related to biodiversity and ecosystem services as determined by their respective governing bodies.” The biodiversity-related conventions have an important role to play in setting the global agenda on biodiversity and ecosystem services, and it is noted that the scientific processes informing policy under each of the conventions may provide useful inputs to the work of IPBES.
2. Ramsar Contracting Parties anticipate that the work of IPBES will strengthen the science-policy interfaces at global, regional and subregional levels and that IPBES could support the integration of conservation and sustainable use of wetlands as well as the

implementation of the Ramsar Convention by providing scientific information to the Convention and its Contracting Parties, in order to support decision-making related to the wise use of wetlands.

Contracting Parties:

3. Contracting Parties will work through the Standing Committee assisted by the Secretariat, the STRP and the CEPA panel to identify and articulate Ramsar implementation needs at global, regional, and subregional levels relevant to IPBES.
4. The Contracting Parties, through the Standing Committee, will adopt the interim guidelines prepared by the STRP with the assistance of the Secretariat, referred to in paragraph 10.
5. Contracting Parties will seek to enhance communication and coordination between counterparts, including relevant focal points at the national level responsible for matters related to Ramsar and for IPBES, to ensure that the needs related to the wise use of wetlands are being considered by IPBES.

The Secretariat:

6. The Secretariat will maintain cooperative working relationships with IPBES and participate as appropriate in IPBES meetings;
7. The Secretariat will assist the STRP in preparing the guidelines referred to in paragraph 10 below.
8. The Secretariat will also support the work of the Contracting Parties, the CEPA Oversight Panel, and the STRP to identify and articulate Ramsar implementation needs which are relevant to IPBES.

The STRP:

9. The STRP will assess its work plan and if appropriate identify the needs and opportunities for improving the interface between science and policy in relation to the wise use of wetlands and identify gaps in scientific, technical and technological information that could assist Parties in identifying priority requests to be submitted to IPBES while it establishes its work plan, to further the implementation of the Convention.
10. The STRP assisted by the Secretariat will prepare interim guidelines to be adopted by the Standing Committee on timely and efficient processes for formulation, approval and transmission of requests from Ramsar to IPBES, taking into account that IPBES is an independent body, and will establish the procedures for receiving and prioritizing requests. The interim guidelines could be revised in consideration of the future development of IPBES and Ramsar, and the most current guidelines will be submitted to the next Conference of the Contracting Parties for adoption.
11. The STRP will continue to work together with the other MEAs' scientific subsidiary bodies on IPBES-related issues, through the Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies

(CSAB), including in the preparation of any joint MEA requests proposed to be submitted to IPBES.

12. The STRP will report to each Standing Committee and Conference of the Parties on the engagement with IPBES and make recommendations on decisions and resolutions to be taken by the Parties, as appropriate.
13. The STRP will provide available relevant wetland information to IPBES in response to notifications and will advise the Secretariat when doing so, and it will report to the Standing Committee's 46th meeting on any actions taken to respond to IPBES notifications. When the response to IPBES notifications has any substantial implications for STRP resources, the STRP Chair will consult with the Standing Committee Executive Team before taking action.

Annex II

Text of the joint statement made the Secretariats and the Chairs of the Scientific Bodies of Biodiversity-related Conventions to the IPBES 1st Plenary (Bonn, January 2013)

“We are pleased that the Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions will participate in the Panel as observers, and that the convention secretariats have been afforded automatic observer status in the Plenary.

In the future, IPBES members might consider some means to ensure effective consultation between the convention secretariats and the Bureau – perhaps drawing upon the practice under IPCC. This might be an element of the strategic partnership with MEAs to be developed in the future.

As we have noted in earlier statements, IPBES has the potential to contribute in many ways to the achievement of the objectives of the biodiversity-related conventions in the broader context of sustainable development. The conventions can benefit from a close relationship with the Platform in effectively exercising their role in setting the policy agenda and promoting its implementation.

In particular, we hope that the Platform will be able to deliver outputs in time to contribute to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets for 2015 and 2020.

As IPBES procedures take shape, it has been noted by some Members that the timing of IPBES submissions, consideration and products may pose challenges for the conventions, given that they have their own time-tables and decision-making processes. In this regard, we appreciate the flexibility afforded to allow relevant input from the conventions. IPBES members – and their representatives in the governing bodies of the conventions – might wish to consider further practical means to streamline these processes and facilitate the communication between the Platform and the conventions at the levels of the governing bodies, scientific bodies and secretariats.

For our part, we will work with the IPBES Secretariat and Panel to provide inputs to the inter-sessional process in line with the procedures established at this Plenary.

In line with decisions of our Conferences of the Parties, we will also facilitate inputs to IPBES-2 arising from the meetings of the bodies of the conventions envisaged to take place in 2013. Among the most relevant, we note the following: the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel in February, the CITES COP16 in March, the CBD SBSTTA in October and the CMS Standing Committee in November. We will also convene this year meetings of the executive heads of the convention secretariats and of the Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies to align our inputs and requests as far as possible and appropriate.

In closing, we wish to welcome the important steps that have been taken at this meeting and look forward to engaging with IPBES during the inter-sessional period and to beginning our substantive work together.”