

## IPBES-8 Highlights: Thursday, 17 June 2021

In a virtual working group setting, the eighth session of the Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES-8) finalized considerations on the scoping report for the transformative change assessment, which will be forward to plenary for approval next week. The working group continued work on the scoping report for the nexus assessment, without reaching agreement in all parts of the document, and the agenda item on capacity building, including interim workplans for IPBES taskforces for the intersessional period 2021–2022.

Highlights of the day included:

- A change of gear in the negotiations of the working group on the scoping reports for the transformative change and the nexus assessment; this led to agreement on the former, while outstanding considerations remain on the latter; and
- Reaching agreement regarding the controversial issue of a chapter of the nexus assessment on energy and climate change as a compromise solution tabled by the Co-Chair was able to bridge divergent views.

### Working Group on Transformative Change

Co-Chair Doug Beard (US) opened the session, urging delegates to make progress. IPBES expert Markus Fischer presented changes proposed by the experts in response to the previous day's deliberations. He suggested inserting a paragraph in the section on scope, stating the assessment needs to be conducted considering the IPBES Conceptual Framework as well as different worldviews and knowledge systems, including Indigenous and local knowledge (ILK). Fischer also suggested referencing the 2030 Agenda—an idea raised in the previous day's discussions. Co-Chair Beard noted this meant the initial paragraph of the section on scope would revert to the original language. Delegates agreed to both proposals.

**Scope, timeline, policy context:** On the section regarding scope, delegates agreed to the proposed text in the Chair's informal note, including a request to have a more detailed mention on the various scales on which to conduct the assessment.

On the section discussing the timeline and geographic coverage, Co-Chair Beard urged keeping text consistent between both the nexus and transformative change assessments; thus delegates agreed to mentioning freshwater ecosystems as well as marine ecosystems. On a request to reflect the temporal scope of the assessment, Co-Chair Beard asked to include text previously agreed upon, which includes the timeline. Delegates agreed.

On policy context, delegates agreed intended users of the assessment should include regional organizations. After some debate, they also agreed the assessment should inform policies relevant for restoration activities, among others.

**Overarching questions and methodology:** Regarding a section on overarching questions of relevance to decision makers

and other stakeholders dealing with transformative change, some Members successfully suggested adding specific questions on:

- social and economic inequalities among and within countries and the way they affect achieving transformative change; and
- the relationship between transformative change and transitional changes and what is needed to make sure that transformative change ensures just transitions.

Discussions also covered previously used terminology referring to “ecosystem services embodied in nature’s contributions to people,” with delegates eventually agreeing on a separate and explicit reference to both terms. One Member suggested highlighting the drivers of biodiversity loss, proposing two additional questions on: the underlying causes of the direct drivers responsible for causing biodiversity loss and degradation; and how emergent and deliberate transformative change can be used to reduce the negative impacts caused by the main drivers of biodiversity loss and degradation. Following a lengthy discussion on whether these considerations were already implicit within the scope of the study, the working group decided not to include these questions. Members further discussed the use of indicators, with an IPBES expert noting this opens a new field of research as we still lack all necessary indicators for transformative change.

The discussion over including specific reference to the Paris agreement resurfaced with some Members underscoring its significance, while others reiterated that mentioning specific agreements is not helpful. Delegates decided to use compromise language referring to “the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the Agenda 2030, and other relevant biodiversity-related goals found within other multilateral agreements and processes.”

On the methodological approach, one Member suggested incorporating a phrase directing experts to consider as inputs other assessments that use the IPBES methodological and conceptual framework. Delegates agreed.

**Chapter outline:** On a draft chapter on visions of a sustainable world, Co-Chair Beard reminded delegates of the agreed overarching paragraph referencing worldviews and knowledge systems. The paragraph reverted to the original language and was agreed with the inclusion of a reference to ensure Indigenous Peoples and local communities’ views and understandings of biodiversity and nature’s contribution to people is included.

On a draft chapter on how transformative change occurs, delegates agreed to including assessment of different dimensions and scientific disciplines. One Member suggested “scientific” could be too narrow. Following consultation with IPBES experts, delegates agreed to assessing “transdisciplinary perspectives.”

On a draft chapter for realizing a sustainable world for nature and people, there was a proposal for including reference to international law and internationally agreed principles as instruments to effect a transformative change. After some debate and a clarification from the IPBES Secretariat on the distinction of the two terms, delegates accepted the amendment.

Delegates further accepted the sections on data and information, capacity building, communication and outreach, technical support, and process and timetable, with minor amendment.

Co-Chair Beard thanked Members for their spirit of compromise and said the draft scoping report will be forwarded to plenary for final approval.

### ***Working Group on the Nexus Assessment***

Co-Chair Beard proposed compromise text for the chapter referencing climate and energy. The text suggested that the paragraph address climate adaptation and mitigation, including relevant aspects of the energy system, which includes energy production, distribution, and consumption. One delegate suggested inclusions of “considerations” so that biodiversity considerations be mainstreamed into energy systems. Another delegate suggested specifying the scope of the chapter to “biodiversity-related” in alignment with IPBES’ mandate. A Member queried whether the text excludes consideration of fossil fuels when addressing climate adaptation and mitigation, which an IPBES expert clarified it did not. Members agreed to make reference to “terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems” and to link this up with the response options to be explored in the chapter.

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the title, with Members disagreeing on whether it should refer to options for delivering sustainable biodiversity-related approaches to climate adaptation and mitigation, including relevant aspects of the energy system in conjunction with “the,” “other,” or “the other” components of the nexus. One Member suggested referring to “relevant global objectives for food, water, and health.” A number of options were considered, offering varying levels of specificity, with the final agreement being to delete the reference to nexus components altogether.

**Chapter outline:** Members engaged in a lengthy discussion on an introductory paragraph. They discussed: different ways to refer to the nexus; terminology around ecosystem services and nature’s contributions to people; a reference to climate adaptation and mitigation including relevant aspects of the energy system; and ways to clarify that climate change is part of the nexus. Following the advice of an IPBES expert, the introductory paragraph was deleted as its content is already included in different parts of the document.

On a chapter introducing the nexus, there was a suggestion to simplify language to refer to the nexus elements rather than stating each one. There was also a suggestion to include a reference to ecosystems when defining where interlinkages and interdependencies should be assessed. Members agreed to both.

For the chapter on the status and past trends of complex interactions in the nexus, Members agreed to a proposal for inclusion of assessing trends in interactions and integrated perspectives of higher order interactions.

On the chapter on future interactions across the nexus, Members agreed to a proposal that assessing different scenarios includes “qualitative scenarios and diverse views of future projections of good quality of life.” On text stating the chapter will include analyses of which interactions are the most influential in determining how the multiple internationally agreed goals can be achieved, Members could not agree whether to include specific reference to the different goals; some suggested using already agreed IPBES language. Deliberations will continue.

The second part of the draft assessment and the chapters it contains address pathways to a sustainable future. On scope, Members agreed to reference “multi-dimensional” alongside multi-sectoral views in assessing the potential for different sets of actors to create change. On the overall themes, Members agreed

to refer to “environmental” rather than “ecological” costs, with one Member asking “cost” to be changed to “impact” and for reference to be made to “multiple value systems.” Members also asked for reference to “ecosystem services” alongside nature’s contribution to people, reflecting earlier discussions. Delegates also asked for the inclusion of reference to terrestrial, freshwater, and marine ecosystems.

Regarding a chapter on policy and socio-political options across the nexus that could facilitate and accelerate the transition to a range of sustainable futures, Members asked for clarification on the use of the term “transition” rather than “transformation.” An IPBES expert responded that the term “transition” was used deliberately as it is more generic and provides scope to consider a wider range of perspectives than the ones that would be described as transformative. One Member also asked for the inclusion of reference to different value systems in relation to understanding conceptualizations of transformative change. The chapter remains bracketed.

On options for delivering sustainable approaches to water, Members suggested: adding the marine sector to the freshwater one; adding land tenure and access to water tenure; studying challenges to implementation also at the transboundary level; studying interactions between freshwater, terrestrial, and marine ecosystems; and including the prevention and management of invasive alien species. These suggestions were agreed upon. A lengthy discussion took place on the term “value of water,” with an IPBES expert suggesting an alternative of “approaches to capture diverse values of water.” Discussions will continue.

### ***Working Group on Building Capacity and Supporting Policy***

Working group Co-Chair Sebsebe Demissew (Ethiopia) introduced the relevant document (IPBES/8/7), saying discussion will take place at the next working group session. Luthando Dziba, MEP Co-Chair, provided an overview of the intersessional workplan for the period 2021-2022 for the Task Force on Capacity Building. He highlighted the IPBES Fellowship Programme, communities of practice, and providing support to other organizations supporting the IPBES deliverables. Deliberations will resume Monday.

### ***In the Corridors***

Today’s virtual session finally saw significant progress on the draft scoping reports for the nexus and transformative change assessments; Members narrowly missed the need for an extra session to catch up on the schedule. After overcoming what was, in some observers’ opinions, arguably the biggest hurdle in the scoping reports—the chapter on energy and climate change in the nexus assessment—Co-Chair Beard’s dream of “marching” through the documents seemed much more likely. Indeed, congratulations and words of appreciation flooded in following the conclusion of the discussion on the transformative change document.

The Co-Chairs, with the help of the experts, used the time in between the working group sessions to redraft text, taking into account the proposals that had been made. This proved helpful in bridging the gap between Members and finding compromise in what at times seemed almost insurmountable. This meant the day’s deliberations proceeded at a mostly quick pace.

This pace, however, was often interrupted with back and forth between delegates reiterating opinions. There were sticking points and, despite clarifications from IPBES experts, some issues still remain regarding the nexus assessment. Time is running out, but today gave many cause for optimism that Members may be ready to pick up the pace again. As Co-Chair Beard stated, although “you are not going to love it, can you live with it? If you can live with it, live with it.”