

IPBES-9 Highlights: Sunday, 3 July 2022

The ninth session of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES-9) opened on Sunday in Bonn, Germany. The first day's deliberation took place mostly in plenary, with delegates listening to opening statements, reports on progress, and introductory remarks on all items in the meeting's agenda. In the afternoon, Working Group 1 began its discussion of the thematic assessment on the sustainable use of wild species, followed by an evening welcoming reception.

Plenary

IPBES-9 opened with a youth choir performing opera classics. Participants watched a video on the importance of IPBES and its contributions to science and policy making.

IPBES Chair Ana María Hernández Salgar opened the session. Via video message, Inger Andersen, UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Executive Director, speaking on behalf of the four IPBES partners (UNEP, UN Development Programme (UNDP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)), noted the fifth UN Environment Assembly welcomed the findings of IPBES assessments, stressing the need to halt and reverse biodiversity decline. She said IPBES needs to: find a workable balance between assessments and uptake; provide underpinnings for business and support the Taskforce for Nature-related Financial Disclosures; and continue interagency collaboration.

Anne Larigauderie, IPBES Executive Secretary, recalled that 2022 marks the 10th anniversary of IPBES. She said from the outset the Platform adopted an innovative, ambitious framework, publishing comprehensive assessments informed by diverse knowledge systems. She provided an overview of achievements thus far and said achieving global development goals can be informed by IPBES assessments.

Chair Hernández, quoting Guatemalan Nobel Peace Prize laureate Rigoberta Menchú, stressed that as long as poverty, racism, discrimination, and exclusion exist, it will be difficult to achieve a world of peace. She emphasized that "our focus goes beyond data generation, it is about intercultural and interscientific dialogues based on solid evidence and transparency." She further highlighted that work during the COVID-19 pandemic is testament to the resilience, ingenuity, and adaptability of the IPBES community.

Regional and stakeholder statements: The Czech Republic, for the EU, underscored that IPBES is a highly regarded source of information on the worrying state of world biodiversity. He noted that IPBES deliverables will be crucial for the GBF and highlighted the Platform's role as a bridge between science and policy. He drew attention to the interdependence of the biodiversity and climate crises, and expressed full solidarity with Ukraine.

Colombia, for the LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN GROUP (GRULAC), emphasized the assessments on sustainable use of wild species (sustainable use assessment) and on the diverse conceptualization of multiple values of nature and its benefits (values assessment) will be of great importance for stakeholders and decision makers. She noted the need to fully understand the interlinkages between sustainable use, and the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, bridging the gap between science and policy.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, on behalf of EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA, said particular focus should be given to the sustainable use and values assessments, the scoping report on business and biodiversity, and engagement with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). He emphasized the importance of knowledge services and skills exchange, particularly regional capacity building.

Senegal, for the AFRICAN GROUP, welcomed the IPBES rolling work programme up to 2030 and the summary for policymakers (SPM) on the sustainable use assessment, including the revised definition of "sustainable use" in the Chair's note. On the values assessment, he called for further clarification of the SPM to enable use by decision makers unfamiliar with nature valuation. He also called for a dedicated assessment on biodiversity and pandemics.

Bangladesh, for ASIA AND THE PACIFIC, expressed hope that the sustainable use and values assessments will enhance action on improving sustainability and integrating conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services in his region. He stressed the need to enhance capacity, especially of national focal points, and that nature conservation and wildlife, and habitat protection, are critical to prevent future pandemics.

The US highlighted the meeting's importance and, for JUSSCANNZ, condemned the Russian military aggression against Ukraine, calling upon the Russian Federation to abide by international law.

Ivonne Higuero, Secretary-General of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), on behalf of biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), highlighted the relevance of past assessments and the work under consideration at IPBES-9 for other MEAs. Pointing to upcoming meetings of the governing bodies of several MEAs, she said that IPBES' timely assessments will strengthen the work of these bodies.

The OPEN-ENDED NETWORK OF IPBES STAKEHOLDERS (ONet) urged recognizing stakeholder contributions, increasing relevant financial support, and continuing expanding IPBES' commitment to inclusivity and diversity. She called for harmonizing the future implementation of the rolling work programme with the GBF and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS FORUM ON BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES (IIFBES) called for further improving spaces in IPBES for Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) contributions. Pointing to the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, she stressed the need to recognize the limitations to expressing Indigenous values in languages privileged by the current system.

Organization of work, admission of observers, and credentials: Chair Hernández introduced the meeting's agenda and organization of work (IPBES/9/1 and Add.1), which were adopted without amendments.

Asia Mohamed (Sudan) was elected as the meeting's rapporteur.

On IPBES membership, Chair Hernández announced that there were 139 members, 2 new members since IPBES-8: North Macedonia and Suriname.

On admission of observers, Members welcomed all new observers as recommended by the Bureau.

On the election of officers, Chair Hernández said that, at the end of IPBES-9, new members for the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) will need to be elected. She added that, regarding Bureau members' terms, Asia-Pacific will nominate a new candidate as vice-chair following a relevant resignation, and Africa and Asia-Pacific candidates for alternate members.

Stadler Trengove, IPBES Secretariat, reported on credentials.

Reports: Executive Secretary Larigauderie presented her report on the implementation of the rolling work programme up to 2030 (IPBES/9/4 and IPBES/9/INF/6, 9, 11, 17, 18, and 23), highlighting work on the upcoming assessments. She provided an overview of the work of the task forces along the IPBES objectives on: assessing knowledge; building capacity; strengthening knowledge; supporting policy; and improving the effectiveness of the Platform.

Robert Spaul, IPBES Head of Communications, reported on communication and engagement, focusing on traditional and social media interactions, impact tracking, and strengthening engagement with stakeholders.

Aníbal Pauchard, Co-Chair of the invasive alien species assessment, presented an update on the ongoing work, focusing on the content of the assessment and its SPM.

Bonnie Myers, IPBES Secretariat, provided progress reports on the scope, selection of experts, and timelines of the nexus and transformative change assessments.

Members recognized that the work of the task forces is now more aligned with ongoing assessments. They also sought concrete ways to increase exchanges of best practices between national platforms. Others noted regional assessments are crucial to making progress on the global assessment; and called for online meetings to ensure meaningful participation. Members also reiterated the need to: bring IPLC values and knowledge systems into all IPBES activities; continue to explore coordination with the IPCC; and support developing countries with capacity building and use of knowledge in policies.

In response to questions, Larigauderie: confirmed work is ongoing for all IPBES functions and will be presented under the relevant agenda item; acknowledged the importance of national platforms, pointing to related work by the capacity building task force; and noted comments on communication.

Pauchard confirmed that the linkage between climate change and invasive species was now part of the assessment, reflecting growing cooperation with the climate change community.

Financial and budgetary arrangements: Chair Hernández introduced relevant documents (IPBES/9/5 and INF/24). Executive Secretary Larigauderie provided an update, including on the fundraising strategy.

Members highlighted: the importance of funding for capacity building; the need to learn from online working arrangements; and the need to diversify contributions from governments and secure a wide funding base from various world regions.

During the discussion, a number of pledges were made, including from AUSTRALIA, FINLAND, JAPAN, and NORWAY.

Chair Hernández noted that the largest in-kind contributions come from the experts, thanking and lauding them. Discussions will continue in the budget contact group, co-chaired by Vinod Bihari Mathur (India) and Hamid Čustović (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Assessing knowledge: Chair Hernández introduced the relevant documents on the sustainable use assessment (IPBES/9/6, IPBES/9/INF/1 and 8), thanking co-chairs Marla Emery (US/Norway), Jean-Marc Fromentin (France), and John Donaldson (South Africa).

Chair Hernández further introduced the relevant documents on the values assessment (IPBES/9/7 and IPBES/9/INF/2 and 7), thanking co-chairs Unai Pascual (Spain), Patricia Balvanera (Mexico), Mike Christie (UK), and Brigitte Baptiste (Colombia).

Parties agreed to directly assign consideration of the assessments to Working Group 1 (WG1), co-chaired by Douglas Beard (Western Europe and Others Group (WEOG)) and Sebsebe Demissew Woodmatas (African Group).

On the scoping report for a methodological assessment of the impact and dependence of business on biodiversity and nature's contributions to people, Chair Hernández drew attention to document IPBES/9/8 and explained discussions will take place under a second Working Group (WG2), co-chaired by Floyd Homer (GRULAC) and Julia Marton-Lefèvre (WEOG).

On engagement with IPCC, Chair Hernández presented the relevant documents (IPBES/9/9 and INF/26). Discussions will continue under WG2.

Building capacity and supporting policy: Chair Hernández presented the relevant documents (IPBES/9/10 and INF/12-16) and assigned substantive consideration to WG2.

Improving the effectiveness of the Platform: Chair Hernández presented the relevant documents (IPBES/9/8, IPBES/9/11, and INF/19-22) and assigned substantive consideration to WG2.

Additional elements of the IPBES rolling work programme up to 2030: Chair Hernández presented document IPBES/9/12 and assigned substantive consideration to WG2.

Dates and venues of future sessions: Chair Hernández presented document IPBES/9/13, noting that IPBES-10 will take place in Madison, Wisconsin, US, and inviting offers to host IPBES-11.

Institutional arrangements: Chair Hernández presented IPBES/9/INF/25, focusing on the UN collaborative partnership arrangement for the work of the Platform. Edoardo Zandi, UNEP, also on behalf of UNDP, FAO, and UNESCO, presented the organizations' activities under the collaborative agreement. He underscored joint initiatives, including on the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) and the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030); and highlighted the four organizations' efforts on several IPBES-related activities.

Welcoming by the host: Steffi Lemke, Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection, Germany, welcomed delegates, inviting them to "send a message for peaceful coexistence and for multilateralism." She highlighted the new Nature for Health Trust Fund to support the shift from nature destruction to nature restoration. Ursula Sautter, Deputy Mayor of Bonn, said biodiversity is about our societies, economies, health and well-being and organizations such as IPBES are showing us the way to a better understanding of, and responsible action for, halting biodiversity loss.

Working Group 1

Co-Chair Woodmatas introduced the session on the thematic assessment of the sustainable use of wild species.

Agnès Hallosserie, Head of the technical support unit, gave an overview of progress made since IPBES-8. Assessment Co-Chair Donaldson presented the four sections of the SPM and their respective main messages. Co-Chairs Fromentin and Emery summarized changes made to the draft contained in the Chair's note (IPBES/9/Other/5) in response to comments received during the final government review of the SPM.

Members commented, *inter alia*, on:

- usability for policymakers and adequate representation of economic, social, and environmental sides of sustainability;
- the need to simplify and streamline key messages for better uptake by policymakers;
- social and economic benefits from the use of wild species;
- the need to highlight land tenure and gender equity;
- the definition of sustainable use;
- balance between challenges and solutions, and consistency with the scoping document;
- inclusion of more data-driven and less conceptual figures; and
- the role of education to foster sustainable use of wild species.

Some inquired why certain comments had not been incorporated into the Chair's note.

In the Corridors

The first day of IPBES-9 began in a celebratory mood, as it is the 10th anniversary of the Platform's creation. The joy of being reunited in person was also evident across the sunny conference center in Bonn. The celebrations did not last long as plenary got right down to business: all agenda items were introduced so the working groups could get underway. WG1 has an arguably harder task as it must finalize the sustainable use and values assessments on time as their launch is carefully choreographed to maximize exposure for IPBES. As was highlighted in the morning session, the Platform's profile attracts increasing attention from all corners. So much so that the first ever contribution from a corporate foundation, the BNP Paribas Foundation, was received this year; a much-needed boost for a budget that has many tasks to implement.