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IPBES-9 Highlights: Monday, 4 July 2022

In a very dense second day, delegates to the ninth session of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES-9) worked late into the night in two working groups to address the ambitious agenda. Working Group 1 (WG1) addressed the thematic assessment of the sustainable use of wild species, while WG2 focused on capacity building, knowledge and data, and Indigenous and local knowledge (ILK).

Working Group 1

WG1 continued discussions on sustainable use of wild species, listening to general comments and initiating textual deliberations.

Delegates reiterated the need for: a list of key messages that will enable better uptake by decision makers; balancing the social, economic, and environmental aspects of the sustainable use of wild species; and non-prescriptive policy options.

Delegates further discussed issues around terminology. A few members suggested addressing: wild species at the genetic level; the fair and equitable sharing of related benefits; and the use of wild species for research and bioprospecting. Others suggested referring to the added value of sustainable use of wild species and zoonotic diseases. A regional group suggested highlighting cultural and religious aspects.

On an introductory paragraph on the assessment's aim, delegates agreed to include language from the scoping document (IPBES/6/INF/8), which identifies challenges and opportunities that ensure and promote the sustainable use of wild species with the aim to eliminate unsustainable and illegal use.

Members discussed the structure of the paragraph's elements and reached consensus. They further discussed: definitional issues around the "sustainable use" of wild species and the "sustainability of use" of such species and references to "intrinsic" or "existence" values of wild species.

On a paragraph setting out the definition and interpretation of "sustainable use" in the context of the assessment, delegates exchanged views on:

- the relationship between sustainable use and the three dimensions underlying the concept of sustainable development (economic, social, and environmental);
- whether to specify the economic dimension separately or as one component of social systems;
- highlighting the move to ecosystem-based approaches rather than population-based approaches to biodiversity conservation;
- the need for clarity, brevity, and accessibility for decision makers; and
- reference to other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and consistency with the scoping document.

The assessment's co-chairs confirmed that science has moved on from the three-pillar model of sustainability, recognizing that economies are social institutions, and explained the difference between the concept of sustainable development and sustainable use as assessed in the report.

Delegates agreed on referencing the definition of sustainable use as developed by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), with additional language reflecting scientific progress and a link to the 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Some delegates remarked that language relating to context was better placed in the introductory paragraph. Views diverged on exact wording, and best format and placement for some of these elements, and discussions were referred to a later stage.

In the afternoon, delegates resumed discussion. On an introductory paragraph defining wild species, delegates suggested references to wild species that have not been domesticated and can survive independently of human intervention. They agreed to removing references specifying the environments where wild species may occur.

On a paragraph providing details on the assessment's structure and content, including definitions of different practices and uses regarding wild species, and other technical terms, delegates agreed to refer to four main groups of wild species (aquatic animals, terrestrial animals, plants, and trees).

The working group addressed underlying key messages from the chapters, initiating discussion on the importance of sustainable use of wild species for people and nature.

Delegates discussed whether to specify which local and global systems embed the use of wild species. Some supported referring to food, medicine, and energy, while a member suggested adding "hygiene." Delegates finally agreed to retain the references as examples of a non-exhaustive list.

Under a section addressing people's reliance on the use of wild species and the benefits from such use, delegates agreed to simplify language referring to types of uses, agreeing on "continuous, daily, or irregular" use. Delegates further agreed on language around: multiple uses that a single species may have and relevant examples; and figures on the number of people relying on different uses of wild species.

On a paragraph specifying numbers of wild species used, types of uses, and related benefits, discussions focused on the way to frame benefits derived from the use of wild species for food. Some members opposed the term "food sovereignty," and suggested using language from SDG2 (zero hunger). Others asked to retain the notion of food sovereignty.

A paragraph on the importance of wild species as sources of subsistence resources and income was approved without major discussions, following clarification related to the economic value of trade in animal products.

On a paragraph discussing gathering practices, the co-chairs explained edits made to accommodate supply for global markets and revisions to a sentence on the role of gender. One delegate asked to specify that the findings referred to "legal trade." The paragraph was accepted without further discussion.

On a paragraph on the importance of wild tree species for millions of people worldwide, delegates discussed whether the focus should be on logging or also reflect "gathering and tourism." Following discussion, references to outcomes of logging affecting other forest-based uses as well as to logging as an important aspect of forest management were moved to the part of the assessment dealing with status and trends in the use of wild species.

On a paragraph on the benefits provided by nature-based tourism, some members suggested removing reference to environmental education, proposing a standalone key message.

On the number of visitors to protected areas and relevant income generation, a member suggested reflecting that the data refer to the pre-COVID-19 period. Another proposed a new key message on protected areas linked to tourism.

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Members agreed to move a sentence on challenges related to income from nature-based tourism, including its equitable distribution, to the part of the assessment dealing with the status and trends in the use of wild species.

In the evening, WG1 resumed its session with delegates accepting a proposal by the co-chairs to simplify the text on the SDGs, specifying direct contributions from sustainable use to SDG14 (life below water) and SDG15 (life on land), and "untapped potential for the remaining SDGs."

A sub-section presenting findings on sustainable use of wild species being central to the identity and existence of many Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) was agreed with few comments and minor changes.

In a sub-section on ensuring sustainability of use of wild species being critical to reverse the global trend in biodiversity decline, members agreed to amend the headline statement with a reference to promoting sustainable use of wild species and halting overexploitation.

In a paragraph discussing effective management systems that promote the sustainable use of wild species contributing to broader conservation objectives, delegates commented on: including ecosystems beyond forests; specifying data underpinning the statement; and deleting the caveat "when properly managed" from a statement on the contribution of revenues.

WG1 was further able to agree on paragraphs dealing with overexploitation as a major threat for wild species in marine ecosystems and on sustainable use of wild species by Indigenous Peoples.

Delegates also addressed a section on the status and trends in the use of wild species. Discussions continued into the night.

Working Group 2

WG2 Co-Chair Floyd Homer opened the session, which, in the morning, focused on capacity building, knowledge and data, and Indigenous and local knowledge (ILK).

Representatives of the task forces on Capacity Building, Knowledge and Data, ILK, Policy Tools and Methodologies, and Scenarios and Models each presented: the highlights of intersessional work done since IPBES-8; their deliverables; work plans for the intersessional period 2022-2023 for consideration and approval, and the period 2023-2024 for information (IPBES/9/10).

The Secretariat presented the draft decisions on building capacity, strengthening the knowledge foundations, supporting policy, and improving the effectiveness of the Platform, contained in the compilation document on decisions (IPBES/9/1/Add.2).

Delegates then turned to the Chair's note on work programme deliverables and workplans of the five task forces for the intersessional period 2022-2023.

During the discussions, members considered:

- including reference to Mother Earth in the nature futures framework (NFF);
- ways to determine whether to hold a meeting online or in-person;
- language on meetings to ensure the uptake of the approved assessment findings, with delegates saying that this should be "subject to the availability of resources";
- conducting an online dialogue with stakeholders on the nomination of experts for the business and biodiversity assessment and the timing thereof; and
- engaging with relevant networks and institutions to encourage communities of practice.

They also discussed:

- exploring opportunities to support potential communities of practice in upcoming assessments;
- including regional engagements to support policy uptake;
- enhancing collaboration with relevant MEAs; and
- including language that specifies that the task force is to support the Platform's engagement with, and strengthening of, national and subregional science-policy platforms.

On knowledge and data, the Secretariat noted that advanced work on knowledge generation catalysis and data management is under consideration.

On knowledge generation catalysis, members discussed:

- the importance and feasibility of including consideration of foresight activities;
- whether the use of guidelines by assessment authors should be mandatory; and
- promoting actions to address identified knowledge gaps by relevant external organizations and initiatives.

On data management, delegates discussed whether to include specific language on entities that provide statistical analysis, when considering which data- and knowledge-providing entities to engage with.

In the afternoon, delegates resumed and concluded consideration of draft text on deliverables and workplans, knowledge and data, and ILK.

On knowledge and data, delegates agreed on text on anticipating future knowledge needs, and making references in decision text on working consistently with IPBES policies and procedures.

On ILK, participants considered and agreed on proposals to clarify the focus of and timelines for the review of the inclusion of ILK in IPBES functions and deliverables. They also considered whether IPLCs and their organizations had a space within which they could engage with each other and with the Platform.

In a general statement, one member underscored the need for better policy support, especially for "decision takers" who need concise recommendations that are not "dumbed down."

Delegates began, but were unable to conclude, consideration of draft text on advanced work on policy instruments, policy support tools, and methodologies. They agreed on text on the purpose and target audiences of the workshops, and on maximizing synergies with other task forces. However, they were unable to agree on the work relating to fact sheets. Discussions will continue.

Delegates then focused on the foundations for the NFF, which forms the foundation for developing scenarios of positive futures for nature, to help inform assessments of policy options across multiple scales. A lengthy discussion over the title and subtitle ensued. Members considered including reference to "Mother Earth"; some suggested the subtitle explicitly state that it is a flexible tool; and others cautioned against changing the title at this stage as there is a growing community of practice. Discussions will continue.

On the first section on the use of scenarios and models, delegates agreed to text stating that "nature embodies different concepts for different people including biodiversity, Mother Earth and other analogous concepts," and to move a paragraph on the definition of nature, used in the Global Assessment, to the footnote.

In the evening, delegates continued considering the foundations of the NFF. They agreed to drop specific reference to developing countries and retain references to potential barriers to monitoring. They reached consensus on including reference to "relevant MEAs and the sustainable development agenda." They further agreed to simplify references of specific feedback processes that may need to be better integrated to improve existing scenario approaches.

Delegates then turned to consideration of the development of a new framework to promote the effective use of scenarios for nature and nature's contributions to people. Discussions included whether: to use the term NFF and "Mother Earth-centered" or "nature-centered" scenarios; nature is a socially constructed concept; and "frameworks" differ from "tools." Discussions continued into the night.

In the Corridors

Bonn continued to show its sunny side, and delegates arrived with a swagger, buoyant from Sunday night's reception offer of great vegetarian food, regional drinks, and long-missed companionship. However, high spirits swiftly sank during the morning sessions, where WG1 slogged through a meager three paragraphs, finishing none, and prompting one delegate to say: "let's just get on with it, two hours and three paragraphs—this is not the way we should run our business."

Things were not much different in WG2, where the co-chairs noted many delegates seemed to be "cogitating on textual connotations" and hinted at a night session in an attempt to hasten the pace. Still things did not pick up, leaving two rooms of increasingly tired delegates meeting well into the night as early as day two of the meeting, wondering how they were going to get to the finish line.