

IPBES 10 Highlights: Tuesday, 29 August 2023

The tenth session of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES 10) continued with substantive negotiations on the summary for policymakers (SPM) of the thematic assessment of invasive alien species (IAS) and the definition of topics to be addressed in future reports up to 2030, among other issues.

Working Group 1

WG 1 Co-Chair Sebsebe Demissew Woodmatas (African Group) opened the session, inviting delegates to provide general comments. Many delegates lauded the comprehensiveness of the work, congratulating the contributors for the quality of the draft assessment report. Others noted that data on some regions were not adequately reflected.

Members reiterated the need for consistency on definitions to make the assessment report more accessible to policymakers and the public. They further called for discussing IAS that have not been documented in the assessment because of the lack of peer-reviewed data and suggested including a “no-action scenario” to draw the attention of decision makers.

WG 1 Co-Chair Douglas Beard (Western Europe and Others Group, WEOG) invited delegates to begin textual negotiations on the draft SPM of the assessment report, starting from the preamble. On an introductory paragraph that sets out the scope of the assessment report, delegates agreed to include references to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). They further agreed to refer to key responses and policy options for “early detection,” in addition to prevention and effective control of IAS. Members further discussed whether to specify the time period when evidence on the trends was evaluated, with the assessment’s Co-Chairs noting that this is addressed further down in the document.

On terminology, regarding the term “alien species,” a delegate suggested, and members agreed, adding a footnote to address the fact that there is no universal definition. The assessment’s Co-Chairs agreed on the usefulness of the footnote, noting that there are alternative definitions of the term.

On a paragraph introducing “biological invasion,” delegates agreed that the process involves transport or movement of “a species” outside its natural range by human activities, following discussion on whether to refer to “individuals of a species” or “propagules.” They further decided to delete reference to negative impacts of biological invasions, with some delegations stressing that the introduction of non-native species does not necessarily mean biological invasion.

Members agreed to clarify that species introduced to new regions through human activities are termed alien species, and further address IAS, noting they represent a subset of alien species. They discussed at length whether IAS have impacts on “ecosystem services” or on “nature’s contributions to people and good quality of life.” A delegate suggested noting that IAS further affect health, economies, social relations, and culture in human communities.

Following informal discussions over lunchtime, delegates agreed to refer to negative impacts of IAS “on biodiversity, local ecosystems, and species.” They also agreed to note that many IAS

also have impacts on nature’s contributions to people, embodying different concepts such as ecosystem goods and services, nature’s gifts, and good quality of life.

On the paragraph listing other major drivers of biodiversity loss, delegates agreed to be consistent with the language of the [2019 IPBES Global Assessment](#). Members queried whether “biological invasions” is the correct term to be used, considering that it was not mentioned in the scoping document. After clarification by the assessment’s Co-Chairs, members agreed to refer to “biological invasions by IAS.” Members also discussed the meaning of “facilitation” in the context of biological invasions.

Discussing how biological invasions can be exacerbated by other indirect drivers, delegates debated a list enumerating extreme events, and the use of the term “natural drivers.” The assessment’s Co-Chairs pointed out that the use of the term “natural drivers” is in line with the [IPBES conceptual framework](#). Delegates disagreed on whether a list of examples is needed, with some delegates wanting to add to the list of extreme events. Co-Chair Beard reminded delegates that the additions should be supported by scientific evidence. He suggested the exclusion of the list of examples, which was met with some disagreements.

On the management of biological invasions, members agreed to refer to regulation-supported prevention, and preparedness planning and actions as well as to eradication, containment, and control of IAS, alongside site- and ecosystem-based management, and ecosystem restoration.

Members could not reach consensus on language on the contribution of effective management of IAS towards achieving the GBF targets and the SDGs. Discussions will also continue on a suggested new paragraph addressing data limitations and knowledge gaps.

Assessment Co-Chair Helen Roy presented the figures throughout the SPM and delegates focused on the definitions included in the first figure.

On the definition of “biological invasion,” delegates discussed whether it should reflect the terms in the glossary. Co-Chair Beard pointed out that the definitions presented in the form of a diagram are short versions of the ones contained in the glossary and thus there is no need to be very detailed.

Delegates discussed whether the definition on “introduction” should: exclude reference to species; include geographic location; and specify that it is outside species’ natural range. Some members also examined the inclusion of “through human activities” in its definition. Co-Chair Roy explained that the scope of the assessment includes human activities.

Working Group 2

Building capacity, strengthening knowledge foundations, and supporting policy: WG 2 Co-Chair Floyd Homer (Group of Latin America and the Caribbean, GRULAC), opened the session and introduced the relevant documents ([IPBES/10/1/Add.2](#), [IPBES/10/8](#), [IPBES/10/INF/9-13](#), and [IPBES/10/Other/3](#)). He recalled the aim for IPBES 10 to consider a revised structure and revised terms of reference for IPBES task forces and workplans for objectives 2 (building capacity), 3 (strengthening the knowledge foundations), and 4 (supporting policy) of the rolling work programme up to 2030 for the intersessional period between IPBES 10 and 11. The five IPBES task forces provided an update on their work since IPBES 9.

Co-Chair Homer presented the revised proposed structure of bodies implementing the workplans. He then invited delegates to address the intersessional activities proposed for each objective, noting institutional arrangements would be addressed at a later stage.

Delegates first discussed the workplan for objective 2.

On how to refer to the desired addressees of the training and familiarization programme, members agreed to not only refer to “IPBES” experts but also to other experts. They further agreed that the IPBES webinar series, online tools, and videos should provide insights into the functioning of IPBES itself, not just into its approved deliverables.

One member opposed subjecting the organization of a youth workshop to the availability of resources, noting this implies a lower priority. Members agreed to reconsider the matter, pending discussions in the financial and budget contact group.

Delegates then turned to the workplan on the data and knowledge management aspect of objective 3.a (advanced work on knowledge and data). Regarding the activities for maintaining the data and knowledge management policy and further developing the long-term vision, members agreed to add a reference to considering guidelines on ethical and responsible use and applicability of data technology advances.

On the activities for sharing relevant information on knowledge and data with capacity-building initiatives under biodiversity-related multilateral agreements, members agreed to add a reference to other research centers.

Turning to the workplan on the knowledge generation catalysis aspect of objective 3.a, members agreed to specify that the task force on knowledge and data will collaborate with the task forces for scenarios and models, and Indigenous and local knowledge in its work on knowledge gaps.

They also converged on calling for the development of an outreach strategy “and engagement plan” to communicate knowledge gaps to research funding organizations, after one member emphasized the importance for IPBES not only to identify knowledge gaps but also try leveraging funding to bridge them.

Members further specified the impact of knowledge generation catalysis efforts to effectively fill the identified gaps will be monitored “and evaluated.”

Across the different workplans, members converged on specifying that the set of indicators to measure the effectiveness of the task forces will be presented at IPBES 11.

Several members requested the deletion of a paragraph featuring across workplans, which invited the exchange of information between the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and IPBES technical support units (TSUs), with some members noting that the IPCC’s TSUs fulfill different functions than those under IPBES. Members agreed to consider this under the discussion of the engagement of IPCC and IPBES.

Additional elements of the IPBES rolling work programme up to 2030: WG 2 Co-Chair Julia Marton-Lefèvre (WEOG) opened the session. Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) Co-Chair Luthando Dziba (African Group) introduced the relevant documents ([IPBES/10/10](#), [IPBES/10/INF/7](#), and [IPBES/10/Other/5](#)) and presented the Bureau’s and MEP’s proposal for IPBES 10 to include in the work programme:

- a second global assessment assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services;
- a fast-track methodological assessment on monitoring biodiversity and ecosystem services;
- a fast-track assessment on integrated biodiversity-inclusive spatial planning and ecological connectivity; and
- a fast-track assessment on biodiversity and climate change, with the exact topic to be determined later.

Co-Chair Marton-Lefèvre invited comments on the topics and timing of future reports. Members expressed strong support for preparing a second global assessment to be delivered at IPBES 15. Marton-Lefèvre also noted general agreement for an assessment on monitoring to be delivered at IPBES 13.

Many members expressed support for an assessment on spatial planning and connectivity. An observer organization recalled calls by various multilateral environmental agreements for IPBES to address this topic. However, one member suggested postponing the connectivity assessment and instead conducting an assessment on living well in balance and harmony with Mother Earth. Co-

Chair Dziba noted the Bureau and MEP’s proposal to cover this issue in the second global assessment.

There was general agreement to keep the last slot in the rolling work programme open for now and come back to it at IPBES 12. A number of members preferred not to prioritize a report on biodiversity and climate change, noting that IPBES is already collaborating with the IPCC and that the topic is adequately covered elsewhere.

Several members emphasized the need to address the issue of pollution, stressing knowledge gaps on this key driver of biodiversity loss. Noting linkages with the recent recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, one member recalled their proposal for a report on biodiversity and vulnerable groups, questioning why the proposal was not considered in the list of requests. Another member enquired about launching another call to identify a topic for this slot.

Other comments addressed, among others: preparing regional assessments in conjunction with the second global biodiversity assessment, allowing more time for the scoping of the spatial planning and connectivity report; allowing for sufficient time for reviews; and using tools other than assessment reports to address issues of interest.

Co-Chair Marton-Lefèvre encouraged delegates to undertake informal discussions on the subject of the second fast-track assessment.

Engagement with the IPCC: Co-Chair Bishwa Nath Oli (Asia Pacific) opened discussions on the agenda item. Executive Secretary Anne Larigauderie introduced the relevant documents ([IPBES/10/1/Add.2](#), [IPBES/10/7](#), [IPBES/10/INF/20](#), and [IPBES/10/Other/2](#)).

Many members shared examples of national activities to facilitate engagement between IPBES national focal points and their IPCC counterparts.

Turning to the draft decision, members diverged on whether to “take note of” or “welcome” the note by the Secretariat on engagement with the IPCC.

They then engaged in a lengthy discussion on further actions regarding a compilation of further suggestions for thematic or methodological issues related to biodiversity and climate change that would benefit from collaboration between IPBES and the IPCC. Several questioned the need for further calls for suggestions. Several delegates stressed the importance of timely cooperation with the IPCC to inform its seventh assessment cycle. Members agreed to add a request for the Executive Secretary to present the outcomes of IPBES 10 at the 60th Session of the IPCC.

Delegates then discussed how to phrase an invitation for IPBES and IPCC national focal points to engage in the scoping processes of each other’s assessments. One member emphasized compliance with the Platform’s and Panel’s rules of procedures. Another noted the actual scoping processes are conducted by experts, with national focal points engaged in their review.

In the Corridors

Working Group 1 initiated textual discussions on the summary for policymakers of the assessment report of invasive alien species (IAS) with a relatively slow pace. Veterans of the process were hardly surprised. Despite a collegial and productive working environment, different understandings surfaced, including on definitional issues.

As one of the assessment’s lead authors explained, part of the complexity can be attributed to the fact that IAS are simultaneously drivers of biodiversity loss and part of biodiversity themselves. With the Working Group Co-Chairs tracking limited progress, many participants agreed that a lot of work will be required to finalize this much-awaited assessment in a timely manner.

In parallel, Working Group 2 began addressing its laundry list of agenda items. There too, it took some time to shift into gear, as every session opened with lengthy introductory remarks. “We love our task forces, but at ten minutes per presentation there’s almost an hour gone right there,” quipped a delegate eager to get into substantive discussions. Delegates nevertheless made some notable progress: “General agreement on two out of four additional report topics is not a bad score at this point,” considered a seasoned delegate.