

IPBES 10 Highlights: Thursday, 31 August 2023

The tenth session of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES 10) advanced its consideration of the summary for policymakers (SPM) of the thematic assessment of invasive alien species (IAS) and their control. Delegates also discussed the initial scoping report for a methodological assessment on monitoring biodiversity and nature's contributions to people.

Plenary

In the morning, IPBES Chair Ana María Hernández Salgar welcomed delegates to a short stocktaking plenary, noting their hard work.

Credentials: The Secretariat reported on credentials received to date. Members approved the report.

Financial and budgetary arrangements: Contact Group Co-Chair Hamid Čustović (Bosnia and Herzegovina) noted that delegates finalized work on: contributions and pledges to the Trust Fund; expenses for 2022; and the revised budget for 2023. He added that work will continue on the proposed budget for 2024 and the provisional budget for 2025, stressing that the Contact Group will liaise with Working Group (WG) 2 regarding pending issues with financial implications.

Working Group 1: WG 1 Co-Chair Douglas Beard (Western European and Others Group, WEOG) noted that, following a slow start addressing definitional terms, the group picked up the pace addressing background messages.

Working Group 2: WG 2 Co-Chair Floyd Homer (Group of Latin America and the Caribbean, GRULAC) highlighted agreement on: the workplans for the intersessional period 2023-2024; preparing a second global biodiversity assessment; and preparing a fast-track methodological assessment on monitoring biodiversity and nature's contributions to people.

He noted the need for further discussions on: institutional arrangements for the implementation of the workplans; terms of reference of IPBES task forces; the subjects of the second and third fast-track assessments; and engagement with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). He indicated the group has yet to begin discussions on improving the Platform's effectiveness.

Dates and venues of future sessions: Delegates accepted Namibia's offer to host IPBES 11 in Windhoek.

Working Group 1

Opening the session, WG 1 Co-Chair Beard encouraged increased efficiency to finish discussions by the end of the day as mandated.

Addressing definitions that required additional deliberation, delegates discussed at length the term "biological invasion," particularly the confusion with IAS and alien species. Assessment Co-Chair Helen Roy suggested distinguishing between biological invasion as "a process" from the status of the species as they go through the biological invasion process. Members also discussed whether to include a reference to pathways of introduction and whether to qualify negative impacts. Following the meeting of a Friends of the Chair Group (FCG), delegates reached a compromise on the definition of "biological invasions," adding a footnote acknowledging that countries have different national and

local legislations, which may include different definitions that are suitable for their respective contexts.

On a sentence referring to managing biological invasions in marine and connected water systems, a delegate questioned whether pathway management is the "only" or the "most" effective option. Coordinating Lead Author Andy Sheppard proposed, and delegates agreed, qualifying that pathway management is "by far, the most effective option."

Regarding the existence of effective decision-making frameworks and tools that can support the management of biological invasions, delegates discussed reference to the precautionary approach. They reached agreement on recognizing that existing tools enable management actions to proceed under a risk assessment and risk management framework in line with the precautionary approach, as appropriate, using inclusive decision making that leads to the review of all measures. They further agreed that decision making is challenged by multiple sources of uncertainty.

Following a lengthy discussion on open-access data, members reached consensus regarding the existence of many sources of accessible literature and information, including open-access data, analytical tools, and other types of knowledge that can be used to support decision making at the national level, which could lead to coordinated management outcomes globally.

On a paragraph discussing the prevention of introductions of IAS as the most cost-effective management option, delegates accepted the inclusion of a sentence on measures addressing IAS that escape from confinement. They further agreed to emphasize the vulnerability of islands to the negative impacts of IAS. However, members could not concur on a sentence regarding support needed for effective prevention measures and the issue will be further addressed at the FCG.

Members continued discussions on prevention measures in the afternoon. They agreed that prevention is particularly important on islands and in ecosystems where eradications pose significant technical challenges. They also agreed that effective prevention depends on adequate and sustained funding, capacity building, cooperation, and other parameters, with discussions ongoing on how to reflect existing gaps in the means of implementation in developing countries.

On a paragraph regarding the success of eradication for small and slow-spreading populations of IAS in isolated ecosystems such as islands, delegates deliberated at length whether to accept a proposal to include a sentence on large-scale eradications. They agreed on the inclusion of successful examples of larger scale eradications (such as muskrat), exclusion of reference to mainland eradications, and indication that large-scale eradications are difficult and unlikely to be feasible. They also agreed to add a sentence on how eradication programmes can be cheaper in the long-term despite their high upfront cost.

On IAS containment and control in cases where eradication is not possible, delegates agreed to refer to the effectiveness of physical and chemical control options at local and larger scales, adding that these control options are limited by labor costs and are generally providing short-term suppression but not sustained control. They reached consensus on highlighting that chemical control may have non-target impacts and is complicated by regulatory compliance requirements and decreasing societal acceptance. Members further agreed on an example highlighting effective suppression of a widespread IAS.

On adaptive management, including ecosystem restoration for improving the management of IAS, a delegate successfully suggested underscoring that most studies have failed to quantify the effectiveness of ecosystem restoration in that regard, leading to inconsistent conclusions regarding the best invasive alien plant control options. Members agreed on highlighting the use of macroinvertebrate-based indices for biodiversity monitoring in freshwater ecosystems, noting associated challenges due to lack of knowledge on freshwater alien species.

On tools, technologies, and new emerging options for management, members agreed with Co-Chair Beard's sentiment that environmental DNA (eDNA) should be considered in a distinct sentence. Delegates were also in agreement to convey the message that regulatory frameworks should keep pace with the development of new technologies in a more positive tone.

Members had a lengthy discussion on: whether management referred to biological invasions or IAS; who is included in multistakeholder engagement; and which approaches to use in assessing potential risks and benefits. Delegates worked together with the Assessment Co-Chairs and came to a compromise on all these matters.

Members further recognized that most countries do not have the regulatory frameworks and/or technical capabilities needed to guide and support development and implementation of new tools and technologies.

Discussions continued in an evening session.

Working Group 2

Additional elements of the IPBES rolling work programme up to 2030: WG 2 Co-Chair Julia Marton-Lefèvre (WEOG) invited delegates to resume the consideration of the initial scoping report for a methodological assessment on monitoring biodiversity and nature's contributions to people.

Delegates engaged in another lengthy discussion on the contentious paragraph on what information and sources the assessment will draw on. One member suggested emphasizing the responsibility and liability of authors in ensuring the quality and validity of cited sources and information. Several others objected to the notion of "liability" and some cautioned against signalling a lack of trust in IPBES experts.

Responding to another member's concerns, the Secretariat indicated that, starting with the nexus and transformative change assessments, all used sources will be made available in time for the first external review.

One member proposed, and delegates agreed, to add a paragraph specifying that the assessment will consider data and knowledge gaps identified by previous IPBES assessments.

Another member proposed developing a conceptual and methodological framework to orient how to work with Indigenous and local knowledge (ILK) systems in the assessment. There was general agreement with the substance of the proposal, but several members and the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) considered that the essence of the proposal is already addressed in other parts of the initial scoping report. Members will come back to this proposal at a later stage.

Turning to the chapter outline, starting with chapter 1 (setting the scene), delegates debated at length how to refer to the monitoring framework for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), especially with regard to its link to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). They settled on referring to the monitoring framework for the GBF, as adopted by the CBD at COP 15 through Decision 15/5.

Regarding chapter 2 (data needs), some members called for a reference to component and complementarity indicators, while others cautioned on the need for prioritization. In line with a previously agreed paragraph, they settled on the assessment giving priority to assessing data needs for headline indicators and, where possible, other indicators of the GBF monitoring framework.

They also agreed the chapter will consider the possible needs of not only "biodiversity monitoring science," but also other scientific disciplines, and different knowledge systems, such as those of Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs), to support the application of indicators.

On chapter 3 (challenges in biodiversity monitoring), some delegates urged assessing the impact of the provision of means of implementation (MoI). Several members expressed openness towards the idea, but objected to the reference to MoI

"in support of the implementation of CBD Decision 15/4 and related provisions." They argued it is too early to assess the implementation of that decision and that such an assessment would be better conducted under the CBD rather than IPBES.

One member suggested assessing the implementation of community-based monitoring and information systems, including the role of collective action of IPLCs, and how to scale them up to act at different levels. Another suggested adding a reference to citizen science.

Regarding chapter 4 (options for strengthening monitoring capacity), some members requested a reference to the provision of MoI, in particular for developing countries. Several others opposed, noting that all countries face barriers and challenges, and saying the reference is covered elsewhere in the initial scoping report. Members eventually agreed the chapter will assess financial, institutional, social, and capacity needs to establish and reinforce sustained, long-term national and subnational monitoring projects and programmes, including those led by IPLCs.

Delegates engaged in a lengthy debate over three paragraphs related to assessing the benefits, options, and institutional and financial requirements for bringing existing monitoring initiatives together into a global biodiversity monitoring network. While some members opposed the idea of creating a global institution, several others underscored the aim is to "assess" the idea of such an alliance for fostering enhanced collaboration and standardization.

On the timetable for the assessment, the Secretariat clarified that it would be feasible to extend the different review periods to eight weeks, pending timely translation.

Delegates then tried to address outstanding issues throughout the initial scoping report. On the scope and rationale of the assessment, members agreed it should support "a balanced and enhanced" implementation of the CBD, "including its three objectives," and contribute to monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals and "relevant multilateral environmental agreements, processes, and efforts, in particular the goals of the biodiversity-related conventions."

Members then debated at length where to place and how to phrase references to:

- the specific circumstances of developing countries; and
- assessing the provision of MoI for developing countries.

One member reiterated opposition to the assessment going "as far back as 50 years," suggesting it should go back to the pre-industrial revolution and strives to consider "the natural state." Pointing to subsequent sentences, the MEP reiterated its assurance that authors would also consider longer-term records where appropriate. Another member noted the timescale for the assessment does not change anything to the agreed timeline for the GBF monitoring framework. Yet another member noted the phrase "going back as far as 50 years" is agreed wording from the [2019 IPBES Global Assessment](#).

A FCG convened with a view to resolve these issues and discussions continued in an evening session.

In the Corridors

"Thanks to IPBES, I learn something new everyday!" stressed Working Group 1 Co-Chair Beard, when deliberations on the assessment of invasive alien species (IAS) referred to the coypu, a large, herbivorous, semi-aquatic rodent from South America, big as a beaver, with dark and small ears, and a long cylindrical tale like a rat. His enthusiasm for this discovery did not level up to his concerns on the pace of negotiations, however. "Do not let the perfect be the enemy of the good," he pleaded again.

Lack of sufficient progress led to another night session for increasingly tired delegates. With the sands quickly running out in the meeting's hourglass, some delegates expressed concerns over the risk of having to adopt the final document without translation into all official languages. A seasoned delegate quickly remarked that adopting the assessment, even carrying out negotiations to the very last second of available time, is key, stressing that, at this stage, potential lack of translation "is the lesser of two evils."

By dinnertime, the picture in Working Group 2 was not much rosier either. Delegates spent all day discussing the initial scoping report for the methodological assessment on monitoring without ever touching upon any of the group's other items. "At this pace, we might have agreement on workplans, but not on who is supposed to carry these out and how," mused an observer.