

## IPBES 11 Highlights: Sunday, 15 December 2024

The two working groups (WGs) addressing the Nexus and Transformative Change Assessments concluded their deliberations, forwarding the assessments to Monday's plenary for further consideration and potential approval. Delegates further addressed the scoping report for a second global assessment on biodiversity and ecosystem services as well as engagement with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in the evening. The contact group on budgetary and financial issues met at lunchtime.

### Working Group 1

**Nexus Assessment:** In the morning, Co-Chair Douglas Beard (Western European and Others Group, WEOG) urged delegates to work efficiently on the remaining key messages, starting with response options that address nexus interactions.

On beneficial outcomes for global policy goals from scenarios focused on synergies among nexus elements, delegates agreed to add that siloed approaches prioritizing a single nexus element limit the achievement of benefits across policy goals. They deleted reference to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and the Paris Agreement, following a clarification from the Assessment's authors that the scenario analysis is explicitly linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Delegates agreed that synergies among policy goals can be achieved through "greater levels of coordinated, timely, and enhanced objectives and actions across policy sectors." They also agreed to a delegate's suggestion noting that food systems' transformation would deliver multiple benefits related to the nexus elements, and address unsustainable agricultural practices, biodiversity loss, and health risks, such as zoonotic diseases and malnutrition.

On response options that address nexus interactions, delegates agreed to add reference to "sustainable bioeconomy" and replace reference to restoration of "blue carbon and other carbon-rich ecosystems" with "ecosystems that contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation," including examples of forests, soils, wetlands, peatlands, and mangroves.

Regarding synergies and trade-offs among response options, delegates agreed that response options reducing competition for land or other resources can facilitate other response options in achieving positive outcomes across several nexus elements. They agreed to add reference to sustainable intensification of agriculture, in addition to ecological intensification, and to food loss and waste.

Delegates agreed to a suggestion to add "urban nature-based solutions" in a list highlighting examples of 24 response options that each advance more than five SDGs and more than five GBF targets. With minor modifications, delegates agreed to proposed text from one delegation, which notes that response options based on mainstreaming biodiversity across and between sectors, while primarily targeting biodiversity, also have considerable potential benefits to other nexus elements and thus support global policy frameworks.

Turning to the three key messages for "governing the nexus for achieving just and sustainable futures," governments agreed, among other modifications, to change reference to the annual biodiversity funding gap being "up to USD 1 trillion" to "in the range of USD 0.3 to 1 trillion." They also agreed to insert two new revised sentences that highlight supporting access to finance and availability of financial resources for developing countries, and note that people who are historically and currently marginalized and Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) face particular challenges in accessing financing.

Delegates then turned their attention to the Assessment's title and preamble. On the title, several members suggested adding reference to climate change, noting that it is the only nexus element that is not included. A few members opposed, urging to retain agreed language from the Assessment's scoping document. The title remained bracketed.

In the preamble, a lengthy discussion took place on whether to refer to the complex and interconnected character of "crises," such as biodiversity loss, water availability and quality, and food insecurity, health risks, and climate change. Many supported retaining the reference to "crises," while some suggested deletion. Co-Chair Beard established a Friends of the Chair (FOC) group to reach consensus.

Following discussions in the FOC group, delegates decided to retain the title as contained in the scoping document for further discussion in plenary. Regarding the preambular text, they agreed that the Nexus Assessment "addresses the complex and interconnected character of the crises and challenges of biodiversity loss, water availability and quality, food insecurity, health risks, and climate change."

Turning for the first time to a box on the contribution of response options to global policy frameworks, delegates agreed to note that these response options are a promising mechanism for integrating efforts and accelerating progress towards multiple policy goals and frameworks.

Governments then agreed to several appendices with no or minor changes. However, on Appendix IV, titled "Brief descriptions of the 71 response options," lengthy discussions ensued on whether or not to include it in the summary for policymakers (SPM). Delegates eventually agreed to retain the descriptions, with inclusion of a disclaimer previously used in the first Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services that the plenary did not negotiate nor approve the table as part of the SPM.

Co-Chair Beard then invited delegates to revert to outstanding issues in key and background messages. Following discussions, members agreed to note that increases in unsustainable food production have been associated with land conversion and the expansion of unsustainable agricultural practices, particularly driven by affluence, further stressing that this has led to biodiversity loss, reduced water availability and quality, increases in greenhouse gas emissions, and increases in the risk of pathogen emergence.

On food trade impacting land-use change as well as biodiversity and climate change, agreement could not be reached as a delegation noted this constitutes a negotiating red line, explaining that it implies that value chains only result in negative

impacts, while international trade also plays a role in securing food security and stabilizing prices. The text was deleted as agreement could not be reached.

A suggestion to note that “land use, biodiversity and climate impacts of consumption are tele-connected through the value chains of food and other consumables to many parts of the world” led to tense discussions, with many delegates supporting it and some opposing. The rules of procedure on decision making were invoked and the IPBES Legal Adviser provided relevant clarifications. The delegation that suggested the text reluctantly retracted it to break the impasse. Some members expressed their frustration at the process.

Co-Chair Beard expressed concerns over the way IPBES’ experts have been treated during the negotiations, including accusations of bias. He thanked them for their hard work and devotion, without which the Assessment could have never been produced.

**Scoping report:** IPBES Chair David Obura outlined the ambition for the evening, to work through the entire scoping report for a second global assessment on biodiversity and ecosystem services. Paul Leadley and Steve Polasky, IPBES Experts, outlined topics that delegates had shared in opening remarks, including a stronger focus on oceans; more clarity on the treatment of different regions; follow-up on knowledge gaps identified in the first Global Assessment; and including different knowledge systems and worldviews.

IPBES Chair Obura invited delegates to consider revised text on the scope and rationale. Delegates agreed to a proposal to delete a bracketed list of stakeholders. On the specific objectives of the second global assessment, a lengthy discussion ensued over whether the assessment should provide support to “relevant” or “biodiversity-related” multilateral environmental agreements. Discussions continued into the night.

### Working Group 2

**Transformative Change Assessment:** In the morning, delegates returned to bracketed text in the background messages of the Transformative Change Assessment. They agreed on wording on incentives for biodiversity loss, stating that “eliminating, phasing out, reforming, or redirecting economic incentives harmful to biodiversity can significantly reduce pressures on nature.”

Members addressed discrepancies in specific numbers attributed to the global biodiversity funding gap, with the Assessment’s co-authors providing relevant clarifications and Co-Chair Eeva Primmer (WEOG) suggesting to add “depending on the source” and noting that figures are adjusted to 2022 inflation. These suggestions were approved.

On targeted and just downscaling of consumption and production, Co-Chair Primmer presented revised text that removed reference to “already rich countries” pursuing economic growth threatening sustainable development “in poorer” countries. Delegates expressed divergent opinions on the qualifiers on rich and poor countries. One delegate, opposed by many, requested removal of text referring to “targeted and just downscaling” of production and consumption and replacing it with “ensuring sustainability.” The text remained bracketed. Later in the day, delegates agreed to add the qualifier “including” targeted and just downscaling to signal that there are other ways of ensuring sustainability.

Delegates then continued discussing background messages related to enabling transformative change guided by Co-Chair Hesiquio Benítez Díaz (Latin American and Caribbean Group, GRULAC). On visions as desirable future states of nature and people shaped by values and worldviews, one delegate suggested reflecting that values and worldviews of Indigenous Peoples have a non-linear conceptualization of the future, which was accepted.

On the important role of values in supporting transformative change visions, a discussion ensued over how to include reference to “Mother Earth,” with one delegate arguing such reference should be made in consistency with the IPBES Nature Futures Framework (NFF). Another delegate called for a formulation stating that Mother Earth is “recognized by some.” Delegates agreed to state “Mother Earth as recognized in the IPBES NFF.”

Delegates accepted a background message on the role of civil society in bringing about transformative change, accommodating requests by delegates to specify that civil society requires “an enabling environment” and that not all civil society initiatives should be supported and amplified, but specifically those that work toward transformative change.

On the preamble, a debate ensued over reference to the SDGs, the GBF, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the Paris Agreement, with one delegate objecting to a reference to the Paris Agreement and others urging its inclusion. A member suggested including reference to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Pointing to similar discussions taking place in the preamble of the Nexus Assessment, delegates deferred consideration of this sentence. They further agreed to: replace “human well-being” with “good quality of life”; add reference to “Mother Earth”; and list “business,” “civil society,” and “IPLCs” as relevant audiences for taking up the messages and evidence in the Assessment.

On final approval of the text, several delegates mentioned the need to ensure that: key and background messages are aligned, including with reference to the NFF and the IPBES Values Assessment; and “ecosystem-based approaches” accompany any mention of “nature-based solutions.”

On figures and tables, following discussions, members decided to delete a figure on challenges and barriers to transformative change, following a suggestion by the Assessment’s co-authors. The WG completed its review of the Transformative Change Assessment with much celebration.

**Engagement with the IPCC:** Co-Chair Primmer resumed deliberations presenting a non-paper following Tuesday’s discussions. Delegates discussed aligning timelines between the two platforms, with new text specifying that the Secretariat, in close cooperation with members of the Bureau, should explore ways to facilitate engagement between IPBES and IPCC National Focal Points at various levels, including at the regional level, as appropriate.

Delegates agreed on revised text requesting the IPBES Executive Secretary to represent the platform at upcoming IPCC sessions and on presenting outcomes of IPBES 11, but differed on requesting the Executive Secretary to provide experts to the Technical Information Exchange as referred to in paragraph 19 of Decision 16/22 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). One delegate argued that making such a request is a “pre-emptive action” given that the CBD already has a robust process for nominating scientists to technical bodies. Discussions continued into the night.

### In the Corridors

Euphoria and despair were closely intertwined as delegates approached the finish line for the adoption of the assessment reports slated for IPBES 11. While discussions on the Transformative Change Assessment concluded in a ‘surprisingly’ smooth manner, the atmosphere was tense as a range of red lines were drawn around the Nexus Assessment.

One thing many did agree on, was strong appreciation for the hardworking authors who had dedicated three years of their lives to these two assessments, only to see language in the Nexus Assessment change significantly in what some saw as a “politicization” of their work. By the time the Nexus working group concluded its deliberations, many of the report’s key contributors had already left back to their home countries in an emotional but hasty goodbye, unable to partake in celebrations that had been delayed to the evening.

As delegates looked ahead to regrouping in plenary, some allowed themselves a breath of relief, hoping that with the working groups’ conclusion of the two assessments, “the worst is now behind us,” while others wondered whether the heightened divisions would set the tone for the meeting’s final day.

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of IPBES 11 will be available on Thursday, 19 December 2024, at [enb.iisd.org/intergovernmental-science-policy-platform-biodiversity-ecosystem-services-ipbes11](https://enb.iisd.org/intergovernmental-science-policy-platform-biodiversity-ecosystem-services-ipbes11)