



Pollination and Land Degradation: Top Priorities for New Intergovernmental Body

First Work Plan and Budget for The Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Approved

Antalya, Turkey, December 14, 2013 – The groundbreaking Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) today agreed to develop a set of assessments on pollination and food production, land degradation and invasive species aimed at providing policymakers with the tools to tackle pressing environmental challenges.

Around 400 delegates from over 100 governments, scientific organizations, civil society and the private sector, attended the second meeting of the Platform in Antalya, Turkey. IPBES Member Governments present at the meeting adopted a very ambitious initial work programme for the Platform for the next five years, and demonstrated strong commitment to its implementation by already pledging more than half (US\$ 25.4 million) of the total US\$ 43.5 million required, in what will be remembered as the “Antalya consensus”.

IPBES was established to assist governments and the public to better understand the trends and challenges facing the natural world and humanity in the 21st century, and thus promote human wellbeing and sustainable development through the sustainable use of biodiversity.

The first assessment, to be available as early as December 2015, will look at pollination and food production. Studies show that some three-fourth of the world’s crops depend on pollination by bees and other pollinators for optimum production. However, more information is needed in order to fully understand how pollination underpins food production and assess the effectiveness of current policies.

A second assessment will focus on the status of land degradation and restoration worldwide, as well as the effect this has on biodiversity, ecosystem services and human wellbeing. According to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, land degradation over the next 25 years may reduce global food production by up to 12 percent, resulting in an increase of as much as 30 percent in global food prices.

Over the next five years, the sub-regional, regional and global scale assessment and capacity building activities undertaken by IPBES will strengthen the science-policy interface at all levels.

In doing so, IPBES will contribute to the objectives of the strategic plans of the biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements.

The Platform will also support work on the integration of indigenous and local knowledge in scientific processes, and on valuation and accounting of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Overall, this work will require contributions from thousands of scientists from around the globe in the fields of natural and social sciences, and indigenous and local knowledge. They will work together to synthesize cutting-edge scientific information and produce tools in order to support the creation of the best possible policies.

Malaysian Zakri Abdul Hamid, the first Chair of IPBES, noted that, in addition to its recognition of indigenous knowledge, a distinguishing characteristic of the IPBES is its mandate to build the capacity of developing countries to conduct biodiversity science.

“There’s an old saying: We measure what we treasure,” said Dr. Zakri. “Though we profess to treasure biodiversity, most nations have yet to devote or acquire the resources needed to properly measure and assess it along with the value of ecosystem services. Correcting that is a priority assignment from the world community to IPBES.”

“The UN’s 2015 Sustainable Development Goals, now under consideration, are expected to include biodiversity-related targets for achievement by 2030, together with indicators of progress,” added Dr. Zakri, also recently appointed to the UN Secretary-General’s new 26-member Scientific Advisory Board. To be effective, obviously, it is vital that nations have the tools and personnel to establish authoritative scientific baselines and collect ongoing data to know whether headway is being made or not.”

The second session of the Plenary of IPBES also adopted a collaborative partnership arrangement with the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Development Programme. The arrangement is intended to provide a framework for collaboration between the four UN bodies and IPBES, recognizing the anticipated roles of each of them in providing specific support to IPBES.

The partnership agreement and the full participation of the UN bodies in IPBES will improve the dialogue between policy-makers and the scientific community on the critical role of biodiversity and ecosystem services. By representing the environment, the sciences, education, food and agriculture, development, and capacity-building, they will bring a range of expertise to support decision and policy-making.

The meeting announced that a French national, Anne Larigauderie, formerly Executive Director of DIVERSITAS and Head of Science in Society at the International Council for Science (ICSU) has been appointed as the Head of the IPBES Secretariat in Bonn, Germany.

ADDITIONAL QUOTES

Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Deputy Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP):

“The decisions taken at this meeting represent a milestone in our efforts to counter the degradation and loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. A firm understanding of the complex processes at play is essential to conserve these services for future generations, and IPBES will help ensure that countries have direct access to sound scientific knowledge for development planning and for the full integration of ecosystem services in our accounting systems.”

Ms. Irina Bokova, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO):

“More precise knowledge of the status of biodiversity and of the services it provides is an indispensable precondition in order to change our attitudes and behavior. UNESCO is pleased to be part of IPBES and will continue to provide its expertise in the sciences as well as in education, culture and communication in order to improve our knowledge of biodiversity and stem its decline, thus ensuring sustainable development and improving well-being for all peoples in all cultures.”

Ms. Maria-Helena Semedo, Deputy Director-General, Coordinator Natural Resources of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO):

“As biodiversity is key for food security, FAO is pleased to be a partner of IPBES. The collaboration between FAO and IPBES will contribute to our joint efforts to safeguard the environment, while adjusting and increasing food and agriculture production for global food security in a sustainable way.”

Mr. Magdy Martínez-Solimán, Director, a.i., Bureau for Development Policy, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

“UNDP is encouraged by progress in the IPBES meeting this week since this will help provide countries with the sound scientific information to make progress towards the next generation of development goals. We know that ecosystems provide invaluable services that underpin development, particularly for the billions of people worldwide who depend directly on biodiversity for their livelihoods and we welcome IPBES’ focus on building capacity to protect and manage this natural capital.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

About IPBES

IPBES was established in April 2012 in Panama City, Panama, and currently has 115 Member States. The Platform is an independent intergovernmental body, open to all member countries of the United Nations. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) provides the Secretariat for the Platform, which operates from Bonn in Germany.

Biodiversity from terrestrial, marine, coastal, and inland water ecosystems provides the basis for ecosystems and the services they provide that underpin human wellbeing. However, biodiversity and ecosystem services are declining at an unprecedented rate and the world failed to reach the Convention on Biological Diversity target of a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010.

In order to address this challenge, adequate local, national and international policies need to be adopted and implemented. To achieve this, decision makers need scientifically credible and independent information that takes into account the complex relationships between biodiversity, ecosystem services, and people. They also need effective methods to interpret this scientific information in order to make informed decisions. The scientific community also needs to understand the needs of decision makers better in order to provide them with relevant information.

IPBES was established to this end. It provides a mechanism recognized by both the scientific and policy communities to synthesize, review, assess and critically evaluate relevant information and knowledge generated worldwide by governments, academia, scientific organizations, non-governmental organizations and indigenous communities.

More information on IPBES, including Frequently Asked Questions and key facts and figures on biodiversity and ecosystem services, as well as opening and closing remarks made at the meeting is available at www.ipbes.net

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