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**Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy  
Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services****Eighth session**

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Item 9 of the provisional agenda\*

**Improving the effectiveness of the Platform****Report by the Bureau, the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and  
the Executive Secretary on progress in addressing the  
recommendations set out in the report on the review of IPBES  
at the end of its first work programme****Note by the secretariat****Introduction**

1. As part of the first work programme of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the Plenary, in section IX of decision IPBES-2/5, mandated a review of the effectiveness of the administrative and scientific functions of IPBES. An internal review, led by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau, was undertaken in the intersessional period between the fifth and sixth sessions of the Plenary. An external review by a review panel comprising 10 members was completed in time for the seventh session of the Plenary.
2. The Plenary, in its decision IPBES-7/2, took note of the activities undertaken to implement the recommendations set out in the report prepared by the internal review team<sup>1</sup> and welcomed the report on the review of IPBES at the conclusion of its first work programme by the review panel<sup>2</sup> and the responses by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, the Bureau<sup>3</sup> and the Executive Secretary<sup>4</sup> to the report. In the same decision, the Plenary requested the Bureau, the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Executive Secretary, in accordance with their respective mandates, to take the recommendations made by the review panel into account in the implementation of the rolling work programme of IPBES up to 2030 and to identify solutions and/or issues for the Plenary to consider at its eighth session.
3. The rolling work programme of IPBES up to 2030 was adopted by the Plenary at its seventh session, in its decision IPBES-7/1, and is set out in annex I to the decision. Objective 6 of the work programme, improving the effectiveness of IPBES, serves to ensure the regular internal and external review of the effectiveness of IPBES and includes the following:
  - (a) *Periodic review of the effectiveness of IPBES*: This objective is aimed at ensuring that the outcome of the review of the first work programme informs the implementation of the rolling work programme up to 2030 and that a procedure is developed for a midterm and a final review of the rolling work programme;

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\* IPBES/8/1.

<sup>1</sup> IPBES/7/INF/17 on activities to implement recommendations arising from the internal review report.

<sup>2</sup> IPBES/7/INF/18.

<sup>3</sup> IPBES/7/INF/19.

<sup>4</sup> IPBES/7/INF/20.

(b) *Review of the IPBES conceptual framework*: This objective is aimed at ensuring that the use and impact of the IPBES conceptual framework are reviewed to inform the evolution of the rolling work programme;

(c) *Improving the effectiveness of the assessment process*: This objective is aimed at providing lessons learned and advice from the authors and other contributors of completed assessments to those undertaking future assessments.

4. In section II of decision IPBES-7/1, the Plenary requested the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau to review the IPBES conceptual framework in line with objective 6 (b) of the work programme. It also requested the Executive Secretary to facilitate the exchange of lessons learned and advice from the authors and other contributors of the completed assessments to those undertaking future assessments.

5. In section VI of decision IPBES-7/1, the Plenary requested the Executive Secretary to seek the views of IPBES members and stakeholders on the process of reviewing IPBES at the closure of its first work programme and requested the Bureau and Multidisciplinary Expert Panel to review that process, taking into account the views of IPBES members and stakeholders, and to prepare draft terms of reference for a midterm review of the Platform for consideration by the Plenary at its ninth session.

6. Section I of the present note sets out information on responses to the recommendations by the review panel and follow-up activities, while section II describes the steps towards a midterm review of the implementation of the 2030 rolling work programme. A draft decision on those matters is set out in the note by the secretariat on draft decisions for the eighth session of the Plenary (IPBES/8/1/Add.2).

## **I. Responses to the recommendations by the review panel and follow-up activities**

### **A. General considerations**

7. The Plenary addressed several recommendations of the review panel through the rolling work programme of IPBES up to 2030, which it adopted in decision IPBES-7/1. The Bureau, the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Executive Secretary further considered the recommendations of the review panel in the implementation of the work programme. The progress made in responding to specific recommendations is set out in document IPBES/8/INF/21.

8. The Bureau and the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, at their thirteenth meetings, decided to further consider some of the recommendations, in particular those regarding:

- (a) The roles of the Bureau and Multidisciplinary Expert Panel;
- (b) Guidance on national focal point roles and good practice;
- (c) The use and impact of the IPBES conceptual framework;
- (d) Improving the effectiveness of the assessment process.

9. The progress achieved in addressing those recommendations is described in the following sections.

### **B. Distinguishing between the roles of the Bureau and the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel**

10. In the report on the review of IPBES at the end of its first work programme, the external review panel found, in its finding 16, “that the IPBES governance structure appeared to many participants to be over-engineered, with an overlap in the duties of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and Bureau, often leading to a duplication of effort and an unclear segregation of duties, which runs contrary to the principles of good governance”. It suggested that “the separation created by the establishment of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau as two distinct bodies had become both cumbersome and seemed to add little value”. Considering the relevant constraints, notably in terms of the budget and staff time used to support committees, the review panel saw an opportunity for a more streamlined governance architecture and recommended in its recommendation 10 that the Plenary consider the matter.

11. The members of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and Bureau considered the recommendation and found that, while there were a number of weaknesses in the current structure as determined by the rules of procedure<sup>5</sup> and the procedures for the preparation of IPBES deliverables,<sup>6</sup> the weaknesses would not justify a revision of the existing rules and procedures of IPBES.

12. Instead, the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau, at their fourteenth meetings, approved modalities and practical guidance for the implementation of their distinct roles in the IPBES assessment process and in the work of IPBES task forces. That guidance is set out in document IPBES/8/INF/22.

13. Furthermore, the Bureau and Multidisciplinary Expert Panel approved a code of practice for their members, which is also set out in document IPBES/8/INF/22.

### **C. Manual for IPBES national focal points**

14. Recommendation 14 of the external review of IPBES states that IPBES should develop comprehensive guidance on national focal point roles and good practice, while allowing for countries to define their own modalities, and develop dedicated channels of communication between IPBES and national focal points and among national focal points.

15. In response to that recommendation, the Bureau and Multidisciplinary Expert Panel developed a manual for IPBES national focal points, which will be made available on the IPBES website.<sup>7</sup>

### **D. Review of the use and impact of the IPBES conceptual framework**

16. Objective 6 (b) of the rolling work programme up to 2030, review of the IPBES conceptual framework, is aimed at ensuring that the use and impact of the IPBES conceptual framework are reviewed to inform the evolution of the rolling work programme. The Plenary, in its decision IPBES-7/1, requested the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau to review the IPBES conceptual framework in line with that objective.

17. The Plenary adopted the IPBES conceptual framework in its decision IPBES-2/4. In decision IPBES-5/1, the Plenary noted that the concept of nature's contributions to people would be used in current and future IPBES assessments. The concept of "nature's contributions to people" has since replaced the use of the phrase "nature's benefits to people" that had been used in the conceptual framework as initially adopted.

18. In response to the request for a review of the use and impact of the conceptual framework set out in decision IPBES-7/1, the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and Bureau have begun a study on the use and impact of the conceptual framework.

19. As part of the study, the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau conducted two online surveys simultaneously, from 6 April to 29 May 2020, one targeting experts in ongoing and completed IPBES assessments and one targeting national focal points and stakeholders. A total of 114 experts from all the completed and ongoing IPBES assessments responded to the survey targeting experts; 231 responses, including 45 from Government representatives and 186 from organizations or individuals, were received in the survey targeting national focal points and stakeholders.

20. In addition, the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and Bureau conducted a literature review to assess the use and impact of the conceptual framework.

21. A draft of the study on the use and impact of the conceptual framework will be made available for external review from 1 June to 31 July 2021. The Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau will take into account any comments received in finalizing the study for consideration by the Plenary at its ninth session.

### **E. Improving the effectiveness of the assessment process**

22. Objective 6 (c) of the rolling work programme up to 2030, improving the effectiveness of the assessment process, is aimed at providing lessons learned and advice from the authors and other contributors of completed assessments to those undertaking future assessments. In that context, the Plenary, in its decision IPBES-7/1, requested the Executive Secretary to facilitate the exchange of

<sup>5</sup> Adopted in decision IPBES-1/1 and amended in decision IPBES-2/1.

<sup>6</sup> Decision IPBES-3/3, annex I.

<sup>7</sup> See <https://ipbes.net/national-focal-points>.

lessons learned and advice from the authors of, and other contributors to, the completed assessments to those undertaking future assessments.

23. Recommendation 17 of the external review included reviewing the range of available ways to modernize the assessment process, including ways to channel and enable effective engagement and new structures, and ways of working, including by digital means.

24. In response to decision IPBES-7/1, the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau reviewed feedback and insights into the IPBES assessment process and decided to recommend to the Plenary that an additional round of review by Governments be piloted between July and August 2021 for the summary for policymakers of the values assessment. Such an additional round of review could enhance the policy relevance of the summary for policymakers and facilitate the consideration of its final version by the Plenary.

25. The Multidisciplinary Expert Panel is making efforts to include more practitioners, in particular in the groups of experts assisting with the scoping processes for assessments; for example, the group of experts selected to assist with the scoping process for the methodological assessment of the impact and dependence of business on biodiversity and nature's contributions to people (IPBES/8/INF/7).

26. The Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau also supported the piloting of new and innovative methods and tools in ongoing IPBES assessments. Related efforts are being led by the task force on knowledge and data. The progress made in such efforts, including in pilot studies on the application of artificial intelligence and natural language processing for IPBES products, is set out in document IPBES/8/INF/11.

## **II. Towards a midterm review of the implementation of the 2030 rolling work programme**

27. Objective 6 (a) of the 2030 rolling work programme is aimed at the periodic review of the effectiveness of IPBES. In that context, the Plenary, in section VI of decision IPBES-7/1, requested the Executive Secretary to seek the views of IPBES members and stakeholders on the completed review process and requested the Bureau and the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel to review the review process, taking into account those views, and to prepare draft terms of reference for a midterm review for consideration by the Plenary at its ninth session.

28. A notification will be issued seeking the views of IPBES members and stakeholders on the review of IPBES at the end of its first work programme after the eighth session of the Plenary. The Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and Bureau will prepare terms of reference for a midterm review on the basis of the responses received.

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