

Report of the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services on the work of its third session

Annex V

Scoping for a regional assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services and functions for the Americas (deliverable 2 (b))

I. Scope, geographic area, rationale, utility and assumptions

A. Scope

1. The region's rich biodiversity and its benefits to people provide essential contributions to the economy, livelihoods, the quality of life and the eradication of poverty. The region is also bioculturally diverse, with traditional knowledge of indigenous people and local communities promoting, among other things, the diversification and conservation of many varieties of cultivated plants and domestic animals that are the staple foods of many other regions of the world. The region has successful experiences in biodiversity conservation, restoration and sustainable use, including some carried out by indigenous people and local communities. On the other hand, climate change, population growth and the consequent increase in demand for food, biomass and energy continue to have a serious impact on biodiversity and ecosystem services and functions. These impacts are felt not only in terrestrial ecosystems, but also in wetlands, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems. In some areas of the Americas, the degree of these impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem services and functions is threatening the economy, livelihoods and quality of life.
2. Within the scope outlined in the generic scoping report (decision IPBES-3/1, annex III), the objective of this assessment will consider these effects, as well as future threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services and their benefits for a good quality of life in the Americas and its subregions (North America, Mesoamerica, the Caribbean and South America), taking into account their differences and the multiple types of social and economic inequality and distinctive biophysical conditions. Key processes, including urbanization and deruralization, natural resource exploitation, pollution, climate change, loss and degradation of natural habitats (terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine) in the subregions, and their impact on biodiversity, as well as the benefits of biodiversity and ecosystem services and functions for people and quality of life, will be taken into account in the assessment of the Americas. The purpose is to make policy-relevant knowledge accessible and useful, using a multidisciplinary and multi-knowledge systems approach, and improving the science-policy interface aiming to improve governance towards sustainable uses of biodiversity and ecosystem services and functions. The assessment will also identify the specific needs of each of the America's subregions regarding support tools at different scales, knowledge gaps and capacity-building needs, including the development of capacity for future sustainable uses of biodiversity.

B. Geographic area of the assessment

3. For the purpose of this assessment, the Americas extend from the Arctic region in the north to the sub-Antarctic region in the south, crossing the equator. There are many ways to subdivide this large region, but for the scope of this regional assessment it has been divided into four subregions: North America, Mesoamerica, the Caribbean and South America:

<i>Subregions</i>	<i>Countries</i>
North America	Canada and United States of America
Mesoamerica	Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama
Caribbean	Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, ^a Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago.
South America	Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, ^a Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

^a On socioeconomic, cultural and historical grounds, the Dominican Republic could be considered part of Mesoamerica, and Guyana part of the Caribbean.

Because of the size of North America and South America in relation to the other subregions, their latitudinal extent and varied physiography, additional subdivisions of these subregions will be contemplated in the subregional assessment.

C. Rationale

4. Biodiversity and ecosystem services and functions make essential contributions to the economy, livelihoods and good quality of life of people throughout the world. The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets seek to provide an overarching framework for effective and urgent action to manage biodiversity in order to ensure that by 2020 ecosystems are resilient and continue to provide essential functions and services, thereby contributing to peoples' quality of life and poverty eradication. These considerations are also included in the ongoing development of the post-2015 development agenda. Regional and/or national biodiversity strategies and action plans are important vehicles for implementing the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and adapting them to regional and national conditions. All these efforts require a strong knowledge base and strengthened interplay between scientists and policymakers, and between different knowledge systems to which the regional and subregional assessments are well placed to contribute. The assessments will themselves be a vehicle for the implementation of the Platform's functions as it relates to capacity-building, the identification of gaps, knowledge generation and the development of policy support tools. Furthermore, such assessments are critical to furthering the Platform's operational principle of ensuring the full use of national, subregional and regional knowledge, as appropriate, including by ensuring a bottom-up approach.

D. Utility

5. The assessment will inform a range of stakeholders in the public and private sectors and civil society, including indigenous people and local communities, which will benefit from sharing information and data that allows progress to be made towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The Americas assessment will provide users with a credible, legitimate, authoritative, holistic and comprehensive analysis of the current state of regional and subregional biodiversity and ecosystem services and functions, based on scientific and other knowledge systems, and with options and policy support tools for the sustainable management of biodiversity and ecosystem services and functions under alternative scenarios; it will also present success stories, best practices and lessons learned. It will identify current gaps in capacity and knowledge and options for addressing them at relevant levels. It will be presented both as a source of detailed information with easy-to-understand infographics, maps and other visual tools, including multiple sources of information from indigenous and local knowledge systems, and in the form of a summary for policymakers, highlighting key policy-relevant, but not policy-prescriptive, findings. The information will be widely disseminated, including by making use of new information and communications technologies.

E. Assumptions

6. In the context of the general assumptions outlined in the generic scoping report, the present section sets out the assumptions specific to the region. The central assumption of the scoping for the Americas regional assessment is that science-based knowledge and indigenous and local knowledge are both relevant to the process. These two types of knowledge systems will be utilized in the assessment. In accordance with the rules of procedure of the Platform, the draft assessment report will be open to peer review by experts, policymakers and stakeholders, including indigenous people and local communities. Another critical assumption highlighted by the scoping process is that the assessment will be scale-dependent and that, while carried out at the regional and subregional levels, all scales are equally important for its scope. In addition to findings at the regional or transboundary levels, local-level patterns and processes are also important in addressing biodiversity and biocultural diversity in the subregions, the relative gaps in science-based knowledge, as well as access to and information from indigenous peoples and local knowledge systems. It is further assumed that the region will have two working languages: English and Spanish.

II. Chapter outline

7. The assessment of the Americas region will follow the chapter outline set out in the generic scoping report but will focus in particular on the regionally specific scope set out in section I above. In addition, chapter 2 will examine the intrinsic value of biodiversity beyond its anthropocentric value underpinning nature's benefits to people.

III. Key data sets

8. Beyond the general issues concerning key data sets outlined in the generic scoping report, the present section sets out issues related to key data sets specific to the region. Relevant data sets from ongoing activities drawn from a wide range of sources, including global, regional, national, subnational and local institutions and organizations, will feed into those from the Americas regional assessment. Some examples are national biodiversity and strategic action plans, national reports, United Nations agencies, regional and national government research bodies, relevant data portals and repositories and subregional and national data sets, as well as data sets from literature, research and citizen science projects, in accordance with Platform procedures.

IV. Strategic partnership and initiatives

9. Beyond the general issues concerning strategic partnerships and initiatives outlined in the generic scoping report, the present section sets out issues related to strategic partnerships and initiatives specific to the region. In order to avoid duplication and identify synergies, the Americas regional assessment process will develop strong connections with regionally specific activities of relevant multilateral environmental agreements. It will also build strategic partnerships with United Nations regional agencies and public or private stakeholders that could provide scientific and technical support to the assessment. Regional, national and local community networks, including indigenous people and local community organizations, could help in linking the Americas regional assessment to local and other knowledge systems and could help on outreach and communication, in accordance with Platform procedures.

V. Operational structure

10. As noted in the generic scoping report, the operational structures best able to deliver the Americas regional assessment, including its capacity-building component, will be identified and utilized. A technical support unit may be established for the Americas region to coordinate the delivery of the regional assessment, working as part of the secretariat.

VI. Process and timetable

11. The process and timetable are set out in the generic scoping report for the regional and subregional assessments of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

VII. Cost estimate

12. The cost estimate is set out in the generic scoping report for the regional and subregional assessments of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

VIII. Communications and outreach

13. In addition to what is outlined in the generic scoping report, it is suggested that national and local governments be encouraged to translate relevant material from the Americas regional assessment report into local and native languages. The Platform will also engage with the relevant scientific community, knowledge holders, stakeholders and policymakers through national focal points and a non-exhaustive list of partners, including national science foundations, academies of science, branches of relevant United Nations agencies, biodiversity and ecosystem services and functions, regional and national networks, centres of excellence, research institutions, universities, international organizations, local, subregional and regional non-governmental organizations, and networks and organizations of indigenous people and local communities, as appropriate and needed.

IX. Capacity-building

14. Capacity-building will be based on the priorities submitted to the Platform by Governments and other stakeholders and will target individuals, institutions and indigenous and local communities through fellowships, training programmes and technical support with regard to access to and management of relevant data and information. It will support the establishment and/or strengthening of regional, subregional and national platforms and networks.