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

Bonn, Germany, 3–9 July 2022

Item 9 of the provisional agenda\*

**Improving the effectiveness of the Platform****Improving the effectiveness of the Platform****Note by the secretariat****Introduction**

1. In decision IPBES-7/1, the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) adopted the 2030 rolling work programme of IPBES, comprising six objectives. Objective 6, “improving the effectiveness of the Platform”, is to ensure the regular internal and external review of the effectiveness of IPBES through:

(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 2030 rolling work programme and that a procedure is developed for a midterm and a final review of the 2030 rolling work programme.

(b) Review of the IPBES conceptual framework: This objective aims to ensure 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 aims to provide lessons learned and advice from the authors of, and other contributors to, completed assessments to those undertaking future assessments.

2. Sections I, II and III of the present note introduce actions taken to implement objectives 6 (a), 6 (b) and 6 (c) as set out above, as well as decisions taken at the seventh and eighth sessions of the Plenary that relate to these objectives. Section IV provides information responding to the request by the Plenary, in decision IPBES-8/4, for a review of the lessons learned from online meetings and other online working practices.

**I. Periodic review of effectiveness****A. Outcomes of the review of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services at the end of its first work programme**

3. As part of the first work programme of 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

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\* IPBES/9/1.

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.

4. 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 end of its first work programme by the review panel<sup>2</sup> and the responses by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau<sup>3</sup> and by the Executive Secretary<sup>4</sup> to that 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.

5. In section VI of decision IPBES-8/1, the Plenary welcomed the 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.<sup>5</sup> It also welcomed a note prepared by the Bureau and the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel on the implementation of their respective roles in practice.<sup>6</sup> At its eighth session, the Plenary also received an overview table with responses to each recommendation of the review panel.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, a text-only version of a manual for national focal points had been finalized and was made available to the Plenary; it has since been replaced by a laid-out version.<sup>8</sup>

6. Also in section VI of decision IPBES-8/1, the Plenary requested the Bureau, the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Executive Secretary, in accordance with their respective mandates, to continue 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 report on progress to the Plenary at its ninth session, and future sessions of the Plenary, as appropriate, including on further solutions and issues.

7. An updated table describing the progress made in addressing each recommendation in the report on the review of IPBES at the end of its first work programme is set out in document IPBES/9/INF/19. Information on work addressing recommendations related to the use and impact of the IPBES conceptual framework and to improving the effectiveness of the assessment process is also set out in sections II and III below.

## **B. Midterm review of the 2030 work programme**

8. 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 the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel to review that process, taking into account the views expressed by IPBES members and stakeholders, and to prepare draft terms of reference for a midterm review of IPBES, for consideration by the Plenary at its ninth session.

9. In response to that request, the Executive Secretary issued notification EM/2022/02 of 12 January 2022, which included a questionnaire seeking the views of IPBES members and stakeholders on the process of reviewing IPBES at the closure of its first work programme. A total of 130 responses to the questionnaire were received by the deadline.

10. In general, respondents rated the review at the closure of the first work programme of IPBES positively, with 63 per cent of respondents stating that the report by the internal review team met their expectations to a high extent or completely and 26 per cent stating that it did so to some extent. For the report on the review of IPBES at the end of its first work programme by the review panel, 71 per cent responded that it met their expectations to a high extent or completely and 21 per cent said that it did so to some extent.

<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.

<sup>5</sup> IPBES/8/8.

<sup>6</sup> IPBES/8/INF/22.

<sup>7</sup> IPBES/8/INF/21.

<sup>8</sup> Available at: <https://ipbes.net/national-focal-points>.

11. The internal review and the review panel's report were rated as further enhancing the work of IPBES to a high extent or completely by 58 per cent and 66 per cent of respondents, respectively, and to some extent by 32 per cent and 24 per cent, respectively. For 67 per cent of respondents, the review panel's report fulfilled its role in supporting the development of the rolling work programme up to 2030 to a high extent or completely, and for 24 per cent it did so to some extent. The scope of the review was considered appropriate to a high extent or completely by 73 per cent of respondents and to some extent by 24 per cent.

12. For the scope of the midterm review of the 2030 rolling work programme of IPBES, the majority of respondents agreed to the proposal to include the following items:

- (a) Effectiveness of the institutional arrangements of IPBES, in particular of the work and sessions of the Plenary, including the format of Plenary consideration of summaries for policymakers and scoping reports (supported by 59 per cent of respondents);
- (b) Effectiveness of the institutional arrangements of IPBES, in particular of the work and structure of IPBES task forces (supported by 51 per cent of respondents);
- (c) Effectiveness of the institutional arrangements of IPBES, in particular of the work of the Bureau and the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (supported by 51 per cent of respondents);
- (d) Effectiveness of the procedures for the preparation of IPBES deliverables, in particular with regard to options for addressing emerging, urgent matters in a timely manner, including the role of workshops (supported by 68 per cent of respondents);
- (e) Impact of the work of IPBES, in particular uptake and use of IPBES products in policymaking and other uses (supported by 75 per cent of respondents);
- (f) Online working arrangements during the coronavirus disease pandemic and useful lessons for the future work of IPBES (supported by 51 per cent of respondents).

13. In terms of the institutional arrangements for the midterm review of the 2030 rolling work programme of IPBES, the following responses were received:

- (a) The midterm review should contain an internal and an external element (91 per cent of respondents).
- (b) The internal element of the review should be conducted by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau (89 per cent of respondents).
- (c) The external element of the review should be conducted by a panel selected in response to a call for nominations (55 per cent of respondents) or a panel of national focal points nominated by regions (32 per cent of respondents).
- (d) The panel conducting the external element of the review should be selected by either the Bureau (55 per cent of respondents) or the Plenary (45 per cent of respondents).
- (e) The external element of the review should be supported by the IPBES secretariat (77 per cent of respondents) or an external organization selected by the Bureau (23 per cent of respondents).

14. On the basis of these responses, the secretariat has developed draft terms of reference, which are set out in the annex to the present note. IPBES members and stakeholders are invited to review the draft terms of reference and provide comments by 31 August 2022. The Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau will take the comments received into account in revising the terms of reference for consideration by the Plenary at its tenth session.

15. At its ninth session, the Plenary may wish to decide that the midterm review of the 2030 rolling work programme of IPBES will be conducted between the tenth and twelfth sessions of the Plenary, so that the results of the review can inform any decisions on the mandate of IPBES task forces and the addition of any work programme deliverables at the thirteenth meeting of the Plenary (see also document IPBES/9/12 for an indicative timeline).

## **II. 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 by 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 concept of "nature's benefits to people" used in the conceptual framework as initially adopted.
18. In response to the request in decision IPBES-7/1, the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau have completed 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 the other targeting national focal points and stakeholders. A total of 114 experts from all completed and ongoing IPBES assessments responded to the survey targeting experts, while 231 responses, including 45 from government representatives and 186 from organizations or individuals, were received for the survey targeting national focal points and stakeholders.
20. In addition, the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau conducted a literature review to assess the use and impact of the conceptual framework.
21. A draft study report was finalized and made available for external review, initially from 1 June to 31 July 2021. The Plenary, in decision IPBES-8/1, prolonged the deadline for comments until 30 September 2021. Comments were received from five Governments and 15 individual experts.
22. The final study report, taking into account the comments received, is available as document IPBES/9/INF/20.
23. The Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau concluded that the surveys of IPBES national focal points and IPBES experts and the literature review both reflect a consensus that the IPBES conceptual framework is very useful and has already had various positive impacts, including guiding IPBES work and stimulating further science-policy and scientific work and discussion on the relationship between nature and people.
24. The study found that the use and impact of the IPBES conceptual framework have increased since its adoption and publication. The various uses indicated in the surveys and the growing number of literature references to the IPBES conceptual framework also suggest that the use and impact of the IPBES conceptual framework will continue to increase.
25. The survey results and the discussion in the scientific literature also suggest that the use and impact of the IPBES conceptual framework, and thus its usefulness for the evolution of the IPBES rolling work programme, could be further enhanced. Thus, the study report suggests that additional clarification concerning the individual components of the framework and what they entail, and concerning the interrelations of the components, would further enhance the operationalization and usefulness of the conceptual framework.
26. The Plenary will be invited to welcome the present note by the secretariat on the use and impact of the IPBES conceptual framework and to invite the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau to take its conclusions into account when guiding and supporting the application of the conceptual framework by IPBES experts and others.

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

#### **A. Improving the assessment process**

27. 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 of, and other contributors to, completed assessments to those undertaking future assessments. In that context, the Plenary, in its decision IPBES-7/1, requested the Executive Secretary to facilitate such exchange of lessons learned and advice.
28. Recommendation 17 of the external review proposed examination of the range of available ways to modernize the assessment process, including ways to channel and enable effective engagement, and examination of new structures and ways of working, including by digital means.
29. The Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau have continued to support the piloting of new and innovative methods and tools in ongoing IPBES assessments, and the task force on knowledge and data has continued to lead related efforts. The progress made in such efforts is described in document IPBES/9/INF/14. A special event to showcase those efforts will be organized in the margins of the ninth session of the Plenary.

30. In response to decision IPBES-7/1, the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau reviewed feedback and insights into the IPBES assessment process. Based on their recommendation, the Plenary, in section II of decision IPBES-8/1, decided, notwithstanding section 3.1 and related provisions of the procedures for the preparation of Platform deliverables, to enable Governments to undertake:

(a) An additional review of the summary for policymakers of the assessment report on the methodological assessment regarding the diverse conceptualization of multiple values of nature and its benefits, including biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services (values assessment), in October 2021;

(b) An additional review of the summary for policymakers of the assessment report on the sustainable use of wild species later in 2021, if considered necessary and feasible by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the co-chairs of the assessment following a review of the comments received during the second external review of the assessment.

31. While an additional review of the summary for policymakers of the assessment report on the sustainable use of wild species was not considered feasible, an additional review of the summary for policymakers of the values assessment report was held in October 2021 and considered very useful by the assessment authors. The Plenary may therefore wish to mandate such an additional review for the assessment of invasive alien species in August 2022.

32. The Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau also decided to pilot, for the nexus and transformative change assessments, an approach to involving more practitioners in the process of preparing assessments. Further information is set out in document IPBES/9/INF/9.

## **B. Review of the expert nomination and selection process**

33. In decision IPBES-8/1, the Plenary requested the Bureau, the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Executive Secretary, in accordance with their respective mandates, to critically review the process for the nomination and selection of experts, including the implementation of the approach to filling gaps in expertise and disciplinary, regional and gender balance, for scoping and preparing assessments and task forces as outlined in annex I to decision IPBES-4/3, including with a view to increasing the participation of practitioners in the assessment process, and to report to the Plenary at its ninth session on progress in that regard.

34. The secretariat has prepared an analysis of nomination and selection processes conducted to date, which is set out in document IPBES/9/INF/22. The analysis shows that further efforts are needed to ensure geographic and disciplinary balance among selected experts.

35. The Plenary may wish to invite Governments from all regions to increase the number of their nominations, to nominate experts from all relevant fields of expertise and to consider gender balance in their nominations.

36. The secretariat will organize online dialogue meetings for national focal points during the nomination period to explain the nature of the deliverable and the expertise required, in order to assist national focal points in the nomination process.

## **IV. Review of lessons learned from online meetings and other online working practices**

37. The Plenary, in decision IPBES-8/4, requested the Executive Secretary, under the guidance of the Bureau, to review the lessons learned from online meetings and other online working practices, to provide proposals to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the IPBES working arrangements, including the implications for the budget, while responding to the need to enable the full and effective participation of members, experts and stakeholders, and to report thereon to the Plenary at its ninth session. In decision IPBES-8/1, the Plenary requested the Executive Secretary to consult the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel on aspects related to reviewing the effectiveness of IPBES in the context of the request in decision IPBES-8/4.

38. In response, the Executive Secretary conducted a survey among participants of online meetings organized by IPBES in 2020 and 2021. The survey was sent, as notification EM/2021/37, to 1,588 meeting participants on 2 December 2021, with a deadline of 3 January 2022.

39. An analysis of the responses is set out in document IPBES/9/INF/21.

40. In sum, it appears that, overall, the majority of participants were satisfied with the various elements of IPBES online meetings. At the same time, a number of disadvantages and technical issues were reported. It is therefore suggested that, in the future, a mix of online and in-person meetings be used. In particular:

(a) Sessions of the Plenary could be held in person whenever possible, while online preparatory meetings could be used to facilitate the in-person discussions and shorten the time needed for the in-person meetings.

(b) The IPBES Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau could hold only one of their two intersessional meetings in person, including the first meeting following the appointment of a new Multidisciplinary Expert Panel or a new Bureau.

(c) The author meetings for IPBES assessments (first, second and, if applicable, third author meetings) and one meeting to advance the summary for policymakers could be held in person to facilitate engagement by all authors and ensure the highest quality IPBES assessments, while further meetings to advance the summary for policymakers could be held online.

(d) The first meeting of an IPBES task force during its three-year mandate could be held in person to allow the group to form a team, understand its mandate and establish working modalities, while other meetings of the task force could be held online where the nature of the work allows.

(e) Dialogues with IPBES national focal points and stakeholders during the external review periods of IPBES products and, in regional settings, on the use of IPBES assessments could be organized online; where warranted by the programme of work, a dialogue with national focal points on a broader theme may be organized in person.

(f) Dialogue workshops with representatives of indigenous peoples and local communities and experts on indigenous and local knowledge, on the determination of questions on indigenous and local knowledge for an assessment and during the first and second external review periods, could be organized in-person, while dialogue workshops during assessment scoping and during additional reviews, if any, could be organized online.

(g) The modalities of other meetings, such as meetings of the IPBES capacity-building forum, youth workshops, meetings on national platforms of biodiversity and ecosystem services and dialogues with research programmers and funders, could be decided on a case-by-case basis, depending on their agenda and context.

## Annex

### Draft terms of reference for the midterm review of the 2030 rolling work programme of IPBES

#### I. Objectives, timing and expected outputs of the review

1. A midterm review of the 2030 work programme will be conducted between the tenth and twelfth sessions of the Plenary.
2. The review will evaluate:
  - (a) The effectiveness of the institutional arrangements of IPBES and its secretariat, in particular of:
    - (i) The work and sessions of the Plenary, including the format of Plenary consideration of summaries for policymakers and scoping reports;
    - (ii) The work and structure of IPBES task forces;
    - (iii) The work of the Bureau and the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel;
  - (b) The effectiveness of the procedures for the preparation of IPBES deliverables, in particular with regard to options for addressing emerging, urgent matters in a timely manner, including the role of workshops;
  - (c) The impact of the work of IPBES, in particular the uptake and use of IPBES products in policymaking and other uses;
  - (d) Online working arrangements during the coronavirus disease pandemic and useful lessons for the future work of IPBES.
3. The Bureau and the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel will prepare a report on the internal review for consideration by the Plenary at its eleventh session, and the review panel will prepare a report on the external review for consideration by the Plenary at its twelfth session. The reports will include specific recommendations for the further implementation of the 2030 rolling work programme.

#### II. Institutional structure of the review

##### A. Internal element

4. The Bureau and the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel will conduct an internal review of the elements listed in paragraph 2 above between the tenth and eleventh sessions of the Plenary.

##### B. External element

5. A review panel will conduct an external review of the elements listed in paragraph 2 above between the eleventh and twelfth sessions of the Plenary.
6. The review panel will comprise 10 members familiar with the work of IPBES, selected by the Bureau based on nominations from Governments.
7. The work of the review panel will be supported by the IPBES secretariat.

#### III. Methodology

8. The review could include the development of a questionnaire and the conduct of a survey, a review of relevant documents and literature, and online interviews and meetings with relevant actors.

#### IV. Budget

9. It is assumed that:
  - (a) The members of the review panel performing the external review would provide their services on a pro-bono basis;
  - (b) The review panel would conduct its work remotely and meet online as needed;

- (c) Two representatives of the review panel could be invited to present the report on their work to the Plenary at its twelfth session; thus a budget of \$7,500 would be foreseen;
  - (d) The secretariat would provide support to the review panel within the scope of existing resources.
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