



**Intergovernmental Science-Policy
Platform on Biodiversity and
Ecosystem Services**

Distr.: General
27 July 2023
English only

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

Bonn, Germany, 28 August–2 September 2023
Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

**Report of the Executive Secretary on progress in the
implementation of the rolling work programme up to
2030**

**Implementation of the conflict-of-interest policy of the
Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and
Ecosystem Services**

In decision IPBES-3/3, on procedures for the preparation of Platform deliverables, the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services adopted the conflict-of-interest policy and implementation procedures set out in annex II to that decision. The annex to the present note, which is presented without formal editing, provides information on the progress made in implementing the policy, along with a report to the Plenary by the Committee on Conflicts of Interest on its activities, which the Committee submitted in accordance with rule 10 of the implementation procedures.

* IPBES/10/1.

Annex*

I. Composition of the Committee on Conflicts of Interest

1. A Committee on Conflicts of Interest was established in 2015, following the third session of the Plenary, in accordance with rule 10 of the conflict-of-interest policy and implementation procedures. The Committee comprised Robert Watson (at that time IPBES vice-chair for the Western Europe and Others Group, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), Alfred Oteng-Yeboah (at that time IPBES vice-chair for the African Group, Ghana), Leonel Serralta (at that time vice-chair for the Latin American and the Caribbean Group, Chile), as well as Tliche Aloui (Tunisia), Haigen Xu (China), Nilay Kaya (Türkiye), Helena Nader (Brazil), Kevin Joseph Cash (Canada) as well as the legal advisor to the IPBES secretariat from the United Nations Environment Programme.
2. Following elections for membership of the Bureau at the fourth session of the Plenary, Robert Watson (at that time Chair of IPBES), stepped down from the Committee, and Alfred Oteng-Yeboah became Chair of the Committee. After the fifth session of the Plenary, Committee member Kevin Joseph Cash resigned and following a call for nominations in January 2018 for candidates from the Western Europe and Others Group, with a deadline of 2 February 2018 was replaced by Jean-François Silvain (France). Following the resignation from Diego Pacheco (Bolivia) as member of the Bureau before the sixth session of the Plenary, the Bureau, at its 11th meeting, selected Ana Maria Hernandez (Colombia) as third member of the Bureau serving as member of the Committee.
3. Following election for membership of the Bureau at the seventh session of the Plenary, Ana Maria Hernandez (Chair of IPBES) stepped down from the Committee, and Prudence Galega (at that time IPBES vice-chair for the African Group, Cameroon), became Chair of the Committee. The Bureau selected Vinod Mathur (India) as third member of the Bureau serving as member of the Committee. Upon resignation of Prudence Galega from the Bureau in October 2019, Rashad Allahverdiyev (Azerbaijan) was appointed Chair ad interim by the Bureau. The Bureau, at its 14th meeting in January 2020, elected Douglas Beard (IPBES vice-chair for the Western Europe and Others Group, United States of America) to serve as Chair of the Committee.
4. The Bureau decided, also at its 14th meeting, to hold elections for membership of the Committee at its 15th meeting in September 2020. At its 15th meeting in September 2020, the Bureau selected one candidate from each of the five UN regions to serve for a period of three years, until the election of their successors. In March 2021, the member from the Asia-Pacific region resigned. The Bureau, at its 17th meeting elected Qin Tianbao (China), for the remainder of the 3-year period for which his predecessor had been elected.
5. The Committee is currently composed of the following members:
 - (a) 3 Bureau members:
 - Douglas Beard (United States of America), Chair
 - Vinod Mathur (India)
 - Rashad Allahverdiyev (Azerbaijan)
 - (b) 5 members, one per UN region:
 - George Owusu Essegbey (Ghana)
 - Qin Tianbao (China)
 - Alla Aleksanyan (Armenia)
 - Raúl Gutiérrez Patiño (Mexico)
 - Maria Alexandra Aragão (Portugal)
 - (c) 1 legal counsel:
 - Stadler Trengove, Principal Legal Officer, Law Division, UNEP, serving as the “additional member with appropriate legal expertise from, and appointed by, the organization hosting the secretariat” (rule 10).

* The annex has not been formally edited.

II. Action by the Committee

A. Overview of declaration forms reviewed since the ninth session of the IPBES Plenary

6. Since the ninth session of the Plenary, the Committee has reviewed all the disclosure forms of the candidates to the following roles:

- (a) Participants in the workshop on scenarios and models;
- (b) Fellows and experts for the business and biodiversity assessment;
- (c) Experts to fill gaps in expertise in the business and biodiversity assessment;
- (d) Experts to fill gaps in expertise in the nexus and transformative change assessments;
- (e) Bureau members.

7. All candidates were required to complete an electronic declaration form on relevant interests, which is set out in the appendix to annex II to decision IPBES-3/3 as part of the IPBES conflict-of-interest policy and implementation procedures. For each selection process, the secretariat compiled the information received through the declaration forms and submitted the compilation to the Committee for its review.

8. The Committee reviewed the compiled information and had access to the disclosure forms and CV's, which on 30 June 2023 corresponded to all the selected experts and fellows, members of technical support units, and nominees to the IPBES Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and Bureau.

B. Meetings and deliberations of the Committee

9. The meetings and deliberations of the Committee were conducted entirely by teleconference.

10. In November 2022, the Chair of the Committee convened an online meeting to consider the declaration forms of individuals nominated to participate in the business and biodiversity assessment. In June 2023, the Committee met online to consider the declaration forms of candidates nominated for election to the Bureau. Further work of the Committee was conducted through written exchange and deliberation.

11. No conflict was identified by the Committee for any of the individuals belonging to the five categories listed in paragraph 6 based on the forms and curricula vitae submitted by the individuals.

12. The Committee's report on its activities, contained in the appendix below, is submitted to the Plenary for information, pursuant to rule 10, paragraph 5, of the conflict-of-interest policy, according to which the Committee submits a report on its activities to the Plenary at least four weeks prior to each session of the Plenary.

Appendix

Report of the Committee on Conflicts of Interest to the Plenary on its activities

Dear Governments and Observers,

The Committee on Conflicts of Interest reviewed all conflict-of-interest forms and additional information submitted from the ninth session of the Plenary to date (25 July 2023).

The Committee discussed, in particular, the declaration forms of the nominees for experts and fellows for the business and biodiversity assessment ahead of the selection of nominees by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, as well as those submitted by candidates for the Bureau. Of the 287 nominations received, 11 candidates had declared relevant activities or interests that the candidates considered as potentially constituting a conflict of interest. The Committee decided, for precautionary reasons, to request these candidates to provide further information on the nature of the activities or interests that might raise concern and to identify adequate measures to mitigate any potential conflicts of interest.

When considering both the initial declarations and the additional information received, the Committee found no conflict of interest as defined in annex II of decision IPBES-3/3 in the forms submitted by individuals selected for an IPBES role.

In doing so, the Committee acknowledged and applied the differentiation between “bias” and “conflict of interest”. The IPBES Plenary, in the IPBES policy on conflicts of interest, set out in annex II to decision IPBES-3/3, defined a conflict of interest as any current interest of an individual that could either: (i) significantly impair the individual’s objectivity in carrying out his or her duties and responsibilities for the Platform, or (ii) create an unfair advantage for any person or organization. Whereas bias, as defined in the IPBES policy on conflict of interest, refers to a point of view or perspective that is strongly held by an individual regarding a particular issue or set of issues in such a way that may eventually lead to the questioning of the integrity of, and public confidence in, the Platform’s deliverables and processes.

The Committee also recalled its earlier consideration, that as one of its strengths, IPBES ensures that the group of individuals involved in a deliverable represent a wide range of experiences, visions and perspectives; and that it is normal that individuals, whether from academia, government, private sector or non-governmental organizations, have some points of view or perspectives that are strongly held as long as these points of view or perspectives do not undermine the integrity of, and public confidence in, the Platform’s deliverables and processes. The Committee also recalled that according to the conflict-of-interest policy, bias is managed with an approach based on three pillars: through the transparent selection of individuals (role of the Committee on Conflicts of Interest and the MEP); through the choice of a group of individuals representing a balance of perspectives (role of the Plenary), and through peer review processes (collective role of experts group or of the organ’s members).

1. The Committee further recalled its earlier conclusion that affiliation with the private sector does not per se constitute a conflict of interest; neither does belonging to government or other organizations. The Committee noted that the group to prepare the business and biodiversity assessment would be comprised of individuals with expertise related to the impact and dependency of different economic sectors on biodiversity and nature’s contributions to people. Consequently, these individuals should come from a diversity of backgrounds, to bring a diversity of relevant expertise to the assessment process, and thus make the assessment scientifically credible, independent, and relevant to policymakers, business and society. The Committee also highlighted that all individuals were selected to participate in the work of the Platform as experts in their individual capacity and not to represent the views of any public or private organization.

2. After two of the candidates, who had declared relevant interests, were selected by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, despite the fact that the Committee on Conflicts of Interest found no conflict of interest, a representative of the Committee engaged with the candidates individually to ensure that the measures identified to mitigate any potential conflicts of interest were well understood and accepted by the candidate.

3. In addition, the Committee took the following actions:

(a) All selected individuals, can only take up office or accept the assignment provided that they agree, as part of their acceptance form, to the following statement: “I understand that I was

selected in my individual expert capacity and not to represent the views of any public or private organization, and that I am expected to serve in a neutral manner, meaning that I will carry out my duties and responsibilities for IPBES, based on the functions and responsibilities of that institution, with full objectivity.”

(b) The Code of conduct for IPBES experts, which all selected individuals, when accepting their role, have agreed to, was modified to include a reference to the IPBES conflict-of-interest policy and procedures;

(c) All IPBES experts, once appointed, receive a document summarizing the conflict-of-interest policy and procedures;

(d) Each online introductory meeting for IPBES authors includes a segment on the conflict-of-interest policy and procedures and the code of conduct for authors. The presentation to authors of the business and biodiversity assessment was held on 29 June 2023.

4. The Committee reflected on the current conflict-of-interest policy and procedures and stands ready to engage with the mid-term review of the 2030 IPBES work programme, as appropriate.

Douglas Beard

Chair of the Committee on Conflicts of Interest

On behalf of the Committee
