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**Ad hoc intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting on an
intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity
and ecosystem services**

Kuala Lumpur, 10–12 November 2008

Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda*

**Consideration of an intergovernmental science-policy platform
on biodiversity and ecosystem services:
governance structure and secretariat functions**

**Governance structure and secretariat functions for an
intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and
ecosystem services**

Note by the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. The key operating principles of the future intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services are that it shall be:

(a) Inclusive of intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental stakeholders and building upon existing networks of scientists and knowledge-holders;

(b) Scientifically independent, credible and subject to critical expert peer review as appropriate;

(c) Responsive to policy needs as identified by decision-making organizations at multiple levels, including biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements, by being legitimate and policy-relevant without being policy-prescriptive;

(d) Underpinned by experiences of relevant assessment processes;

(e) Monitored from the outset with procedures for measuring its effectiveness.

2. Its governance structure should be defined in accordance with those operating principles. It should also be cost-efficient and should avoid creating additional administrative burdens wherever possible.

3. Options for the platform's governance structure and secretariat functions, developed on the basis of comments received from Governments and relevant stakeholders to date, are presented below. It is proposed that participants at the present meeting should consider the various options presented below

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and agree on appropriate institutional arrangements that meet the needs of Governments and all stakeholders while adhering to the key operating principles listed above.

II. Legal status

4. Regarding the platform's legal status, options might include the following:

(a) The platform is established as an intergovernmental body whose status is distinct from the existing intergovernmental organizations and is not institutionally connected to any of them. It might be established by a decision of an intergovernmental conference;

(b) The platform is established as an intergovernmental body whose status is distinct from the existing intergovernmental organizations but is institutionally linked with one or more of the existing international organizations (e.g., through the provision of the secretariat or administrative services therefor). It might be established by a decision of an intergovernmental conference or by a decision of an existing intergovernmental organization or concurrent decisions of two or more intergovernmental organizations;

(c) The platform is established as an intergovernmental body, which is a subsidiary body of an existing intergovernmental organization. It might be established by a decision of the governing body of an existing intergovernmental organization;

(d) The platform is established as a body in which intergovernmental and non-governmental entities are combined and is distinct from the existing intergovernmental organizations. It might be established by a decision of an intergovernmental or other international conference;

(e) The platform is established as a body in which intergovernmental and non-governmental entities are combined, and it is a subsidiary body of an existing intergovernmental organization. It might be established by a decision of the governing body of an existing intergovernmental organization.

III. Plenary

5. It is expected that there will be forum within the platform where all participating Governments and relevant organizations and stakeholders meet in a plenary setting. Irrespective of the name of a plenary meeting, its functions might include the following:

(a) Overseeing the platform's operation;

(b) Taking decisions on the platform's institutional arrangements;

(c) Adopting a programme of work, including a list of topics to be addressed by the platform;

(d) Approving the budget;

(e) Reviewing the implementation of the programme of work, including financial and operational reports prepared by the platform's secretariat;

(f) Reviewing, adopting or approving major reports or executive summaries;

(g) Adopting the platform's rules and procedure, including the rules of procedure of meetings and financial rules.

6. Options for the modality of the platform and its plenary meeting might include the following:

(a) The platform is open to all States that are members of the United Nations or specialized agencies. It comprises those States that have signified their intention to participate in the platform. All those Governments meet in plenary and each Government has one vote. It is open also to relevant organizations and stakeholders who may participate in the proceedings of plenary meetings without the right to vote;

(b) The platform is open to all States that are members of the United Nations or specialized agencies, in addition to relevant organizations and stakeholders. Each Government has one vote. The relevant organizations and stakeholders also have qualified votes, the total number of which should not exceed the total number of votes of participating Governments.

IV. Executive body

7. To assist the work of the plenary and to oversee the implementation of policy guidance during its intersessional period, a particular type of executive body may be considered. Possible functions of such an executive body might include the following:

- (a) Identifying donors and partnership arrangements for the implementation of activities in the initial four-year period;
- (b) Overseeing the implementation of the initial four-year period of activities according to the principles and procedures established by the plenary;
- (c) Overseeing the management of financial resources and reporting thereon to the plenary.

8. Options for such an executive body might include the following:

- (a) A bureau, comprising the chair of the platform and other members elected by the platform at its plenary meeting.¹ The members of the bureau will include scientists and other stakeholders nominated by Governments. The chair will invite the representatives of the relevant multilateral environmental agreements and other intergovernmental bodies in the field of biological diversity and ecosystem services to attend bureau meetings.
- (b) An executive board, comprising members appointed by the plenary meeting. The term of each member of the executive board will be four years, renewable once. Members will include government representatives, representatives of major groups, scientific organizations and the private sector. Representatives of relevant United Nations bodies and multilateral environmental agreements will be ex officio members. Geographical distribution and gender balance will be duly taken into account in appointing members of the board. The chair of the platform will serve also as the chair of the board. The board will meet as necessary.

V. Scientific advisory group

9. To support the functions of the platform plenary and to undertake scientific work, a scientific advisory group might be established to oversee the platform's scientific credibility. The group might comprise prominent scientific experts chosen in manner taking into account regional, gender and discipline balance for a given term (e.g., four years, renewable once). Their functions might include the following:

- (a) Overseeing the peer review process to ensure the highest levels of scientific quality and credibility for all products delivered by the platform;
- (b) Selecting experts for and establishment of working groups and task forces as needed to undertake activities under the initial four-year period work programme;
- (c) Identifying emerging issues warranted for further scientific analysis by the platform's working groups or task forces;
- (d) Certifying the scientific credibility of reports and findings;
- (e) Ensuring broad international scientific consensus on issues under consideration by wide consultation;
- (f) Overseeing the implementation of the initial four-year period of activities according to the principles and procedures established by the plenary;
- (g) Approving specific procedures related to the conduct of assessments and other studies;
- (h) Considering and deciding whether reports submitted by the working groups and task forces should be classified as accepted, adopted or approved.

¹ The actual number will be determined by the plenary.

VI. Secretariat

10. The platform's secretariat will be provided by the existing international organization or organizations to support the platform's undertakings and the provision of administrative services therefor. Its functions might include the following:

- (a) Supporting the platform's day-to-day operations and coordinating the implementation of activities during the initial four-year period.
 - (b) Setting up monitoring procedures for measuring the effectiveness of activities during the initial period, used from the outset for programme evaluation, development and continuation;
 - (c) Ensuring coordination between platform working groups;
 - (d) Liaising with participating Governments and international organizations on platform matters;
 - (e) Organizing meetings of relevant bodies of the platform;
 - (f) Proposing the budget;
 - (g) Managing a trust fund for the platform;
 - (h) Publicizing and disseminating platform reports to the wider scientific and policymaker community, including translation of summaries into all United Nations official languages;
 - (i) Establishing a platform website.
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