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**Plenary meeting to determine modalities and institutional
arrangements for an intergovernmental science-policy
platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services
First session**

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Item 4 (f) of the provisional agenda*

**Consideration of the modalities and institutional
arrangements for an intergovernmental science-policy
platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services:
work programme of the platform**

**Options for implementing the knowledge generation function of
the intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity
and ecosystem services**

Note by the secretariat

The annex to the present note sets out the executive summary of a report by the secretariat on options for implementing the knowledge generation function of the intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services. The full report, in English only, is presented in document UNEP/IPBES.MI/1/INF/3/Add.1. The report has been produced by the secretariat in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

* UNEP/IPBES.MI/1/1.

Annex

Options for implementing the knowledge generation function of the intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services

Executive summary

1. The outcome document of the third ad hoc intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting on an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services, known as the “Busan outcome”, states that the proposed platform should:

identify and prioritize key scientific information needed for policymakers at appropriate scales and catalyze efforts to generate new knowledge by engaging in dialogue with key scientific organizations, policy makers and funding organizations, but should not directly undertake new research.”

2. Current coordinated initiatives supporting the generation of policy-relevant scientific information include those of global research programmes such as the International Council for Science, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Academy of Sciences for the Developing World and others. Various continuing and recently completed assessment initiatives and periodic reports on the state of the environment, along with a large number of other intergovernmental and international science programmes generating knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystem services, have also contributed significantly to identifying knowledge gaps that such research programmes have addressed. In addition, a range of monitoring initiatives has been established to support policy-relevant knowledge generation, including the GEO Biodiversity Observation Network, the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership and others. Such programmes aim to assess the state of knowledge, including through the identification of any gaps; the global research programmes also support the generation of new research to fill such gaps.

3. While such initiatives are of great value, further efforts to generate and keep current a base of scientific information on biodiversity and ecosystems are required. In particular, there is a need to build a common and shared knowledge base that identifies gaps in knowledge and catalyses efforts to fill such gaps through new scientific research. There are a number of options for implementing this element of the work programme building on existing activities. Potential activities could address the following:

(a) Filling fundamental knowledge gaps concerning the dynamic interactions between drivers of change, ecosystems and human well-being;

(b) Filling significant gaps in long-term observation and monitoring programmes, in particular with regard to data and information on interactions between drivers of change, ecosystems and human well-being;

(c) Ensuring common and regularly reviewed guidance on a strategic approach to policy-relevant research, including ensuring that the most important needs for scientific information to support more effective governance at all levels are being identified and responded to in a coordinated manner;

(d) Ensuring the effective incorporation of different types of knowledge into the platform knowledge base, including the incorporation of knowledge from other sectors and disciplines, non-formal knowledge and mutual learning;

(e) Improving access to data, information and knowledge of all types that are already available, but with currently restricted access.

4. The knowledge generation element of the work programme will be mutually supportive of the assessment, capacity-building, policy tool and methodology functions of the work programme, and a synergy that can be enhanced through planning and processes that are put in place for the work programme’s delivery. Information on knowledge gaps is a key output from the assessment process because it clearly identifies the information needs of policymakers that new research must meet. It is therefore important for knowledge generation that the platform’s assessments identify scientific information needed by policy makers. These assessments must identify gaps in scientific knowledge that can then be the focus of efforts to catalyse new knowledge through scientific research. In addition,

an important function of the platform might be to identify and prioritize knowledge that is available for assessment. Such a function could be implemented through a scoping process analogous to that undertaken for assessments for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which would determine the availability of scientific information and identify gaps therein.

5. There are a number of options for implementing the knowledge-generation functions of the platform. These could include:

- (a) Establishing a working group to identify gaps in scientific information and to work with scientific institutions and donors to catalyse the filling of such gaps;
- (b) Establishing expert groups to deal with specific aspects of the knowledge-generation work programme;
- (c) Establishing a science panel to oversee the knowledge-generation element of the platform's work programme;
- (d) Developing a work programme to identify gaps and catalyse knowledge generation;
- (e) Incorporating the knowledge generation function as one of the tasks of the platform's secretariat.

6. The plenary may wish to consider how this element of the work programme will build on existing initiatives of key scientific organizations and science funding organizations in support of efforts to identify and prioritize needs for scientific information and to catalyse efforts to fill remaining gaps.
