



**United Nations
Environment
Programme**

Distr.: General
16 July 2011

Original: English

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

Nairobi, 3–7 October 2011

Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda*

Consideration of the modalities and institutional arrangements for an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services: functions and operating principles of the platform

Functions and operating principles of the platform

Note by the secretariat

Introduction

1. At the third ad hoc intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting on an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services, held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 7 to 11 June 2010, the representatives of Governments reached agreement that an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services should be established, as stated in the “Busan outcome”, the outcome document of the meeting. In paragraph 6 (f) of the Busan outcome, it was stated that the platform should be established as an independent intergovernmental body administered by one or more existing United Nations organizations, agencies, funds or programmes, and, in paragraph 6 (g), that the platform’s decision-making body should be known as the “plenary”.

2. The present note sets out the platform’s functions and principles as identified in the Busan outcome. These functions and principles could be used as the basis for consideration of the platform’s modalities and institutional arrangements.

A. Functions of the platform

3. Pursuant to paragraph 6 of the Busan outcome, the platform’s objective is to strengthen the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development, with the following functions:

(a) Focusing on government needs and based on priorities established by the plenary, the platform should respond to requests from Governments, including those conveyed to it by multilateral environmental agreements related to biodiversity and ecosystem services as determined by their respective governing bodies. The plenary should welcome inputs and suggestions from, and the participation of, United Nations bodies related to biodiversity and ecosystem services as determined by their respective governing bodies. The plenary should also encourage and take into account, as

* UNEP/IPBES.MI/1/1.

appropriate, inputs and suggestions made by relevant stakeholders, such as other intergovernmental organizations, international and regional scientific organizations, environment trust funds, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. To facilitate this, and to ensure that the work programme of the platform is focused and efficient, a process to receive and prioritize requests should be established by the plenary;

(b) The platform should identify and prioritize key scientific information needed for policymakers at appropriate scales and catalyse efforts to generate new knowledge by engaging in dialogue with key scientific organizations, policymakers and funding organizations, but should not directly undertake new research;

(c) The platform should perform regular and timely assessments of knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystem services and their interlinkages, which should include comprehensive global, regional and, as necessary, subregional assessments and thematic issues at appropriate scales and new topics identified by science and as decided upon by the plenary. These assessments must be scientifically credible, independent and peer-reviewed, and must identify uncertainties. There should be a clear and transparent process for sharing and incorporating relevant data. The platform should maintain a catalogue of relevant assessments, identify the need for regional and subregional assessments and help to catalyse support for subregional and national assessments, as appropriate;

(d) The platform should support policy formulation and implementation by identifying policy-relevant tools and methodologies, such as those arising from assessments, to enable decision makers to gain access to those tools and methodologies, and, where necessary, to promote and catalyse their further development;

(e) The platform should prioritize key capacity-building needs to improve the science-policy interface at appropriate levels and then provide and call for financial and other support for the highest-priority needs related directly to its activities, as decided by the plenary, and catalyse financing for such capacity-building activities by providing a forum with conventional and potential sources of funding.

B. Operating principles of the platform

4. In paragraph 7 of the Busan outcome, the representatives of Governments concluded that in carrying out its work the platform should be guided by the following operating principles:

(a) Collaborate with existing initiatives on biodiversity and ecosystem services, including multilateral environmental agreements, United Nations bodies and networks of scientists and knowledge holders, to fill gaps and build upon their work, while avoiding duplication;

(b) Be scientifically independent and ensure credibility, relevance and legitimacy through peer review of its work and transparency in its decision-making processes;

(c) Use clear, transparent and scientifically credible processes for the exchange, sharing and use of data, information and technologies from all relevant sources, including non-peer-reviewed literature, as appropriate;

(d) Recognize and respect the contribution of indigenous and local knowledge to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems;

(e) Provide policy-relevant information, but not provide policy-prescriptive advice, mindful of the respective mandates of the multilateral environmental agreements;

(f) Integrate capacity-building into all relevant aspects of its work according to priorities decided by the plenary;

(g) Recognize the unique biodiversity and scientific knowledge thereof within and among regions, and also recognize the need for the full and effective participation of developing countries and for balanced regional representation and participation in its structure and work;

(h) Take an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach that incorporates all relevant disciplines, including social and natural sciences;

(i) Recognize the need for gender equity in all relevant aspects of its work;

(j) Address terrestrial, marine and inland water biodiversity and ecosystem services and their interactions;

(k) Ensure the full use of national, subregional and regional assessments and knowledge, as appropriate.

5. Pursuant to paragraph 8 of the Busan outcome, the platform's efficiency and effectiveness will be independently reviewed and evaluated on a periodic basis as decided by the plenary, with adjustments to be made as necessary.

Suggested action

6. Representatives may wish to take into account the above functions and operating principles during their consideration of the platform's modalities and institutional arrangements, including the following issues:

(a) Possible functions and structures of bodies that might be established under the platform (as discussed in document UNEP/IPBES.MI/1/4), including the platform's plenary, the platform's chair and vice-chairs, subsidiary bodies of the plenary, working groups and the platform's secretariat;

(b) Rules of procedure for meetings of the platform (as discussed in document UNEP/IPBES.MI/1/5), including those governing the election of the platform's officers;

(c) Financial rules and procedures, including procedures governing any trust funds that might be established for the platform;

(d) Procedures for the development and implementation of the platform's work programme;

(e) Procedures for receiving and prioritizing requests submitted to the plenary.
