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

Panama City, 16–21 April 2012

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 structures  
of bodies that might be established under the platform**

**Functions and structures of bodies that might be established  
under an intergovernmental science-policy platform on  
biodiversity and ecosystem services**

**Note by the secretariat**

The annex to the present note sets out the outcomes of the deliberations at the first session of the plenary meeting on the functions and structures of bodies that might be established under an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services, as originally circulated in annex II to the report of the meeting (UNEP/IPBES.MI/1/8).

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\* UNEP/IPBES.MI/1/1.

## Annex

# Functions and structures of bodies that might be established under an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services

## 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, representatives of Governments agreed 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. They also identified the platform’s main functions and operating principles and principal institutional arrangements. Annex I [to the report of the first session of the plenary meeting] highlights the platform’s main functions and operating principles. The present annex outlines the possible functions and structures of bodies that might be established under the platform.

## I. Institutional arrangements for the platform

2. The Busan outcome states that the platform should be established as an independent intergovernmental body administered by one or more existing United Nations organizations, agencies, funds or programmes. While the legal status of the platform will be defined by the way in which it is established, as an independent intergovernmental body it will be constituted by Governments with a permanent structure so that it can function autonomously. For the purpose of its administration, the platform is expected to be institutionally linked to existing United Nations organizations, agencies, funds or programmes, which might agree to perform administrative functions for it.

## II. Plenary

3. As stated in the Busan outcome, the plenary should be the platform’s decision-making body.

### A. [Membership

4. *No agreement has yet been reached.*

### B. Participation of United Nations bodies and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations

5. *No agreement has yet been reached.*

### C. Functions

6. The functions of the Plenary include:

- (a) Acting as the platform’s decision-making body;
- (b) Responding 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;
- (c) Welcoming inputs and suggestions from, and the participation of, United Nations bodies related to biodiversity and ecosystem services as determined by their respective governing bodies;
- (d) Encouraging and taking into account, as appropriate, inputs and suggestions made by relevant stakeholders, such as other intergovernmental organizations, international and regional scientific organizations, environmental trust funds, non-governmental organizations, indigenous [peoples] and local communities and the private sector;

[(d) *bis* Establishing a mechanism to ensure the active and efficient participation of civil society in the plenary.]

- (e) Selecting one Chair and four Vice-Chairs, taking due account of the principle of geographical balance among the five United Nations regions, based on criteria, a nomination process and length of service to be decided by the plenary;

- (f) Selecting members of any subsidiary body, taking due account of the principle of geographical balance among the five United Nations regions, based on criteria, a nomination process and length of service to be decided by the plenary;
- (g) Approving a budget and overseeing the allocation of the trust fund[s];
- (h) Deciding on an evaluation process for independently reviewing the platform's efficiency and effectiveness on a periodic basis;
- (i) Adopting a programme of work for the platform, including on knowledge generation, assessments, policy support and capacity-building;
- (j) Establishing subsidiary bodies and working groups as appropriate;
- (k) Setting up a transparent peer review process for the production of reports by the platform;
- (l) Deciding on a process for defining the scope of reports and for the adoption or approval of any reports produced by the platform (following agreement on the work programme);
- (m) Adopting and amending rules of procedures and financial rules.

## **D. Officers of the plenary**

### **1. Composition**

7. With regard to the officers of the plenary, one Chair and four Vice-Chairs should be selected by Governments that are members of the plenary, taking due account of geographical balance among the five United Nations regions. Guidelines covering the nomination process, length of service and any rotation of the chair of the plenary among the regions are provided for in the rules of procedure of the plenary.

### **2. Functions**

8. As set out in the rules of procedure and as decided and directed by the plenary, the functions of the Chair include the following:

- (a) Presiding over meetings of the plenary;
- (b) Chairing the Bureau of the plenary;
- (c) Representing the platform as its Chair.

9. As set out in the rules of procedure and as decided and directed by the plenary, the functions to be carried out by the Vice-Chairs include the following:

- (a) Serving as rapporteur of the plenary;
- (b) Participating in the work of the Bureau;
- (c) Acting as the representative of the platform as Vice-Chair as necessary.

### **3. Guidelines for the nomination and selection of the Chair and Vice-Chairs**

10. The following guidelines could be taken into account in the processes for nominating and selecting the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the plenary:

- (a) Ability to carry out the agreed functions of the Chair and Vice-Chairs;
- (b) Scientific expertise in biodiversity and ecosystem services with regard to both natural and social sciences among the officers of the plenary;
- (c) Scientific, technical or policy expertise and knowledge of the main elements of the platform's programme of work;
- (d) Experience in communicating, promoting and incorporating science into policy development processes;
- (e) Ability both to lead and work in international scientific and policy processes.

11. The guidelines for the selection of officers by the plenary might need to be viewed in the light of the programme of work adopted by the plenary and agreement on the work programme. The extent to which the skills of the Chair and the Vice-Chairs complement one another might also need to be taken into consideration in the nomination and selection processes.

### **III. Administrative and scientific functions to facilitate the work of the platform**

12. One or more subsidiary bodies should be established by, and report to, the plenary to support the smooth, effective and timely operation of the platform. The subsidiary body or bodies will, as decided by the plenary, provide administrative and scientific oversight and facilitate the operations of the platform.

13. Such administrative functions include:

- (a) Addressing requests related to the platform's programme of work and products that require attention by the platform between sessions of the plenary;
- (b) Overseeing communication and outreach activities;
- (c) Reviewing progress in the implementation of decisions of the plenary, if so directed by the plenary;
- (d) Monitoring the secretariat's performance;
- (e) Organizing and helping to conduct the sessions of the plenary;
- (f) [Reviewing the observance of the platform's rules and procedures;]
- (g) [Reviewing the management of resources and observance of financial rules and reporting thereon to the plenary;]
- (h) Advising the plenary on coordination between the platform and other relevant institutions;
- (i) Identifying donors and developing partnership arrangements for the implementation of the platform's activities.

14. Such scientific and technical functions include:

- (a) Providing advice to the plenary on scientific and technical aspects of the platform's programme of work;
- (b) Providing advice and assistance on technical and/or scientific communication matters;
- (c) Managing the platform's peer-review process to ensure the highest levels of scientific quality, independence and credibility for all products delivered by the platform at all stages of the process;
- (d) [Engaging the scientific community and other knowledge holders with the work programme, taking into account the need for different disciplines and types of knowledge and effective contribution by scientists from developing countries;]
- (e) Assuring scientific and technical coordination among structures set up under the platform and facilitating coordination between the platform and other related processes to build upon existing efforts;
- (f) [Facilitating technology transfer in the context of capacity-building according to the work programme of the platform;]
- (g) Exploring ways and means to bring different knowledge systems, including indigenous knowledge systems, into the science-policy interface.

*Section B was the subject of preliminary discussion only. No agreement was reached.*

#### **[B. Potential options for the structure and composition of subsidiary bodies of the plenary**

15. There are a number of options for the structure of any subsidiary bodies that might be established by the plenary. Options that appeared to receive the greatest support during initial discussions on subsidiary bodies included:

*Option 1:* One subsidiary body would be established, which would be an expanded Bureau of the plenary. This body would perform all the functions listed above. The Bureau would include the Chair, four Vice-Chairs and additional members (such as an additional three members from each region) in a manner respecting geographical, gender and disciplinary balance. The Bureau might also

include additional stakeholders, such as representatives of multilateral environmental agreements, United Nations agencies and intergovernmental organizations as observers;

*Option 2:* Two subsidiary bodies would be established. In this option, the plenary might establish a small Bureau comprising of only the Chair and Vice-Chairs that would oversee the administrative functions listed above, and a larger science panel that would carry out the scientific and technical functions listed above. The science panel would be established in a manner respecting geographical, gender and disciplinary balance. The science panel might also include additional stakeholders, such as representatives of multilateral environmental agreements, United Nations agencies and intergovernmental organizations as observers.

16. Regarding option 1, the ability of a large and infrequently convened body to carry out the functions ascribed to it would need to be reviewed to ensure that it could deliver a high-quality service to the plenary. Upon such review, a future option available to the expanded Bureau to consider might be to establish a smaller Executive Committee comprising the Chair, Vice-Chairs and a small subset of Bureau members to support functions that might require more regular support.

17. Regarding option 2, the relationship and independence between the small Bureau and the science panel would have to be clarified to avoid conflict, duplication or confusion. To avoid overburdening the small Bureau with the administrative functions assigned to it, the Bureau would almost certainly require additional support from the Secretariat to implement its functions.]

*Section C was not discussed.*

### [C. Working groups

18. In addition to the above subsidiary bodies, and depending on the decisions related to their establishment, the plenary might establish working groups or other structures to implement the platform's work programme. The functions to be performed by such groups or structures could include:

(a) To identify and prioritize key scientific information needed for policymakers and to catalyse efforts to generate new knowledge (without undertaking new research);

(b) To perform regular and timely assessments of knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystem services and their interlinkages, which might include comprehensive global, regional and, as necessary, subregional assessments, thematic issues at appropriate scales and new topics identified by science;

(c) To identify 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;

(d) To prioritize 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 to catalyse financing for such capacity-building activities by providing a forum with conventional and potential sources of funding.

19. While recognizing that any agreement to establish working groups would take place only after more detailed discussion of the work programme, preliminary options for the establishment of working groups or other structures to deliver the platform's work programme might include:

(a) *Option 1:* Two working groups are established, one to undertake assessments, generate knowledge and support policy, and the other to oversee the capacity-building work on the platform in relation to knowledge generation, assessment and policy support. Both working groups are established with geographic, disciplinary and gender balance;

(b) *Option 2:* Two working groups are established, one to undertake assessments and the other to oversee the work on knowledge generation, policy support and capacity-building. Both working groups are established with geographic, disciplinary and gender balance;

(c) *Option 3:* Regional structures are established (whether working groups or centres), to oversee the full programme of work (knowledge generation, assessment, policy support and capacity-building) at the regional level. Regional working groups would comprise regional experts with gender, disciplinary and within-region geographic balance. In addition, ad hoc and time-bound working groups might be formed to undertake global and/or thematic assessments. Such global and/or thematic groups would be formed with geographic, disciplinary and gender balance.]

## IV. Secretariat

20. The secretariat will have the following indicative administrative functions, acting under the direction of the plenary:

- (a) Organize meetings and provide administrative support for meetings, including the preparation of documents and reports to the plenary and its subsidiary bodies as needed;
- (b) Assist the officers of the plenary [and any subsidiary bodies established by the plenary] to undertake their respective functions as decided by the plenary, including facilitating communication between the various stakeholders of the platform;
- (c) Facilitate communication among any working groups that might be established by the plenary;
- (d) Disseminate public information and assist in outreach activities and in the production of relevant communication materials;
- (e) Prepare the platform's draft budget for submission to the plenary, manage the trust fund[s] and prepare any necessary financial reports;
- (f) Assist in mobilizing financial resources;
- (g) Assist in facilitating the monitoring and evaluation of the platform's work.

21. Furthermore, the secretariat might be tasked by the plenary with undertaking technical support functions, such as providing relevant assistance to ensure that the platform implements its work programme. Such potential functions need to be developed following discussion of the work programme and would be implemented under the direction of the plenary.

22. Options available for the institutional arrangements of the secretariat might include:

(a) *[Option 1: A single central secretariat dealing with administrative functions only. In such an arrangement, one or more United Nations organizations and specialized agencies (such as the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Development Programme) could consider seconding fully dedicated staff to the platform. At its inception, the secretariat would operate from a single location while exploring networking with regional and thematic technical structures;]*

(b) *[Option 2: A distributed secretariat dealing with administrative functions at both the central and regional levels. In such an arrangement, United Nations organizations and specialized agencies and other regional organizations with appropriate expertise could consider:*

- (i) Providing administrative support to the platform;
- (ii) Seconding fully dedicated staff;
- (iii) Exploring networking through the World Wide Web.]

## V. Financial and other contributions to the platform

23. A core trust fund to be allocated by the plenary will be established to receive voluntary contributions from Governments, as well as from United Nations bodies, the Global Environment Facility, other intergovernmental organizations and other stakeholders such as the private sector and foundations, on the understanding that such funding will come without conditionalities, will not orient the work of the platform and cannot be earmarked for specific activities. Its use will be determined by the plenary in an open and transparent manner. Specific requirements for governing the trust fund will be specified in financial rules and procedures to be adopted by the plenary.

24. Exceptionally, subject to approval by the plenary, additional voluntary contributions may be accepted outside the trust fund, such as direct support for specific activities of the platform's work programme.

25. In kind contributions from Governments, the scientific community, other [knowledge-holders] and [stakeholders] are encouraged and will be key to the success of the implementation of the work programme.

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## **VI. Evaluation of the operation of the platform**

26. The platform's efficiency and effectiveness should be independently and externally reviewed and evaluated on a periodic basis as decided by the plenary, with adjustments to be made as necessary.

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