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First session

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Item 7 (b) of the provisional agenda*

Institutional arrangements: link between the Platform and the United Nations system

Link between the Platform and the United Nations system

Note by the secretariat

1. In paragraph 1 of the resolution on the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services adopted at the second session of the plenary meeting to determine modalities and institutional arrangements for an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services, convened in Panama City from 16 to 21 April 2012, the representatives of the Governments consenting to the resolution decided to establish the Platform as an independent intergovernmental body (see UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/9, annex I). In paragraph 2, it was decided that the first session of the Plenary of the Platform would decide on the link between the Platform and the United Nations system.

2. It is recalled that at the discussions on legal issues at the above meeting, an overwhelming majority of representatives supported the establishment of the Platform, at the session, as an independent intergovernmental body. Among those who were in favour of that action, a number of representatives stated that there should be a road map for the eventual transformation of the Platform into a body with autonomous functions within the United Nations system, while others opposed the idea of a road map (see UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/9, para. 35).

3. With the above background, the representatives of the members of the Platform may wish to consider, at its Plenary, whether to maintain the current status of the Platform independent from the United Nations system, with possible institutional linkage with the United Nations system regarding the administration of the Platform's secretariat, or to transform the Platform into a body with autonomous functions within the United Nations system, and if the latter is desired, to consider

* IPBES/1/1.



also a process for establishing such institutional linkage with the United Nations system and possible institutional arrangements thereafter.

4. With respect to the institutional arrangements regarding the secretariat of the Platform, paragraph 3 (a) of the above resolution envisages that when the Plenary of the Platform decides to establish the secretariat, an institutional linkage with the United Nations system will be established for that purpose, with a view to its being administered by one or more of the following: 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. Such institutional arrangements between the Platform and an organization or organizations within the United Nations system might be made, should the Platform so decide and should the organizations concerned accept such arrangements, irrespective of whether the Platform remains an independent intergovernmental body outside of the United Nations system or becomes an intergovernmental body within the United Nations system.

5. Regarding the legal and institutional frameworks of the Platform, as envisaged in paragraph 2 of the above resolution, the matter remains open for decision of the Plenary. The Plenary could decide to maintain its current independent status or to transform the Platform into a body with autonomous functions within the United Nations system. Should the Plenary so decide the latter could be achieved by concurrent decisions of the Plenary and the governing body or bodies of the organization or organizations concerned within the United Nations system. It could be triggered by a decision of the Plenary of the Platform to invite the relevant organization or organizations, possibly through the executive head or heads of such organization or organizations, respectively, to have the governing body or bodies concerned take necessary decisions. Upon decision of such governing body or bodies to accept such invitation and adopt the Platform as part of its or their institutional framework(s), the Platform could be transformed into an intergovernmental body within the United Nations system. When such transformation is determined, due consideration might be given to the coherence between the institutional arrangements for the Platform and the arrangements for the secretariat of the Platform. While the Platform might remain functionally autonomous, the Platform would become part of the institutional structures of the organization or organizations concerned, which might require, among other things, reporting by the Platform to the respective governing body or bodies. The legal opinions of the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations and those of the secretariat of the United Nations Environment Programme, as contained in document UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/8 submitted to the above meeting in Panama City, describe relevant processes and might prove useful for the consideration of this matter.