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Item 8 (a) of the provisional agenda\*

**Communications and stakeholder engagement:  
communications and outreach strategy****Draft communications and outreach strategy (deliverable 4 (d))****Note by the secretariat****I. Introduction**

1. The present note is based on the principles and guidelines enunciated in the draft communication and outreach strategy presented at the second session of the Plenary (IPBES/2/12), which was designed to provide a framework for the communications of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and serve as the founding document for all communications strategies to come.
2. Following an initial discussion at its second session, the Plenary, in its decision IPBES-2/9, requested the secretariat, under the supervision of the Bureau and in cooperation with the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, to prepare a draft communications and outreach strategy for consideration by the Plenary at its third session. The present note has been prepared in response to that request. In decision IPBES-2/9 the Plenary further requested the secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau, to develop and implement a policy for the use of the Platform logo (see IPBES/3/INF/9).

**II. Context**

3. The purpose of all communications activities will be to ensure that the Platform is recognized as a credible, relevant, independent and legitimate platform that produces policy-relevant – but not policy-prescriptive – knowledge products and builds capacity for the use of biodiversity and ecosystem services knowledge in decision-making.
4. More specifically, communications activities will be aimed at promoting the work of the Platform among key audiences and coordinating outreach for the Platform's assessment findings. The aim of the Platform's communications approach and activities shall be to ensure that timely and appropriate information enters the public domain – both proactively to communicate reports, and reactively in response to questions or criticism.
5. While the communications strategy would need to focus on promoting the work of the Platform among key audiences, the stakeholder engagement strategy should focus on encouraging the participation of stakeholders in the Platform's work. The latter is covered by the revised draft stakeholder engagement strategy, which is submitted as a separate document (IPBES/3/16). The revised draft communications strategy set out in the present note will focus on two key areas: (a) day-to-day communications; and (b) the launch of assessment reports.

\* IPBES/3/1.

6. In developing the strategy, certain factors that could hinder communication efforts among audiences, such as different languages and culture-specific communication styles, were taken into consideration. To address these challenges, communications materials would be provided in all six official United Nations languages, where practical. In its communications and outreach activities, the Platform would also pay attention to the specific context of different countries. This reflects an understanding that the needs of developing countries may be different to those of developed countries and may require tailor-made outreach activities.

7. To ensure coordination and coherence of the Platform's communications, the secretariat would work with all parts of the Platform: the Bureau, the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, the technical support units, the coordinating lead authors and others, as appropriate. The secretariat could also evaluate the Platform's communications and report to the Plenary, including on the type and extent of outreach and media coverage. Evaluation reports should also be presented to the Bureau and the Panel at regular intervals.

8. The revised draft communications strategy comprises the following elements: goals and objectives, audience analysis, messages, areas of activity and evaluation. For the sake of brevity, this revised draft communications and outreach strategy will only focus on key points and will not be an exhaustive list of all messages, tools, audiences and outreach activities that will be used to implement communications and outreach work.

### **III. Goals and objectives**

9. The Platform's primary 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. Communications efforts will be based on the principle that the Platform shall be policy-relevant but not policy-prescriptive. The Platform will not engage in advocacy and will not provide policy recommendations.

10. Setting specific objectives from a communications perspective can provide a process for evaluation from the outset. Such objectives would be:

(a) To reaffirm the Platform's reputation as a credible, transparent, independent and legitimate intergovernmental body that strengthens the policymaking and knowledge interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services;

(b) To communicate assessment findings and provide clear and balanced information on biodiversity and ecosystem services, including on risks and scientific uncertainties, without compromising accuracy;

(c) To raise awareness about all the Platform's functions, which go beyond assessments and support knowledge generation, capacity-building and the identification of policy-relevant tools and methodologies;

(d) To explain the way in which the Platform works, selects its authors and reviewers and produces its reports so as to promote an understanding of its work;

(e) To position the Platform as one that adds value to the work already undertaken in the field of biodiversity and ecosystem services to support policymaking;

(f) To foster two-way communication between the Platform and its audiences, so as to improve the Platform's products and messages.

### **IV. Audience analysis**

11. The audience for the communications strategy needs to be well defined in order for the strategy to be well focused. The Platform has a mandate to provide scientific and technical information on biodiversity and ecosystem services to policymakers who need scientifically credible and independent information to be able to adopt local, national and international policies that could address the challenges of biodiversity loss and decline in ecosystem services. Accordingly, the communications and outreach strategy would need to be directed towards the intended beneficiaries of the Platform's work programme: Governments and policymakers at all levels, including the member States of the Platform and the multilateral environmental agreements.

12. While the stakeholder engagement strategy would need to find ways of boosting the participation of stakeholders in the Platform's work programme and deliverables, the communications and outreach strategy would need to be designed with the intended beneficiaries in mind. By focusing

on the intended beneficiaries of the Platform's work, it would be easier to make a distinction between primary and broader audiences.

13. Suggested primary and broader target audiences for the Platform's outputs are listed below. In the interests of brevity, the list is not exhaustive:

- (a) Primary target audiences:
  - (i) Policymakers in the field of biodiversity and ecosystem services at all levels: Platform member States, ministries of environment, energy, industry, planning, finance and agriculture, local authorities and the scientific advisers of policymakers need to be informed about the Platform so that they can use it as a source of independent knowledge;
  - (ii) United Nations and multilateral environmental agreements: some United Nations programmes and multilateral environmental agreements are key clients for the Platform's reports. The Platform will work with them, including during outreach and dissemination activities;
- (b) Broader audiences:
  - (i) Scientific community: the Platform depends on the scientific community for the production of its reports and should therefore target this community to increase its engagement. International associations of scientists could be targeted as part of the outreach activities;
  - (ii) Indigenous and local knowledge holders: the Platform has identified the indigenous and local knowledge community as an important target audience;
  - (iii) Business and industry: it is anticipated that the Platform's reports will be considered by businesses and industries interested in the Platform to help them find sustainable ways of avoiding, minimizing and offsetting their impacts on ecosystems;
  - (iv) Practitioners or implementers: a multitude of organizations and individuals involved in the implementation of biodiversity and ecosystem services working on the ground will be interested in learning about the products of the Platform, such as policy support tools, and how they can use them;
- (c) Community-based organizations: certain communities will be greatly affected by biodiversity loss and will therefore need to be aware of the findings of the Platform's assessments and policy support tools. The Platform secretariat could work with relevant networks to disseminate communications materials to these communities;
- (d) Intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations: these may be able to support the Platform's objectives by providing outreach to their constituencies, including policymakers or the private sector;
- (e) The media: the Platform secretariat would not be in a position to reach all audiences directly and would therefore rely on good media relations to reach broader audiences.

14. While the Platform secretariat itself might not be in a position to produce derivative products aimed at specific audiences, it may engage with organizations that take elements of the Platform's assessments and communicate them in more audience-specific formats.

## V. Messages

15. Messaging would need to be coordinated, in particular during the launch of assessment reports, when there will be heightened interest in the work of the Platform. Prior to the launch of assessment reports, the secretariat could work with report co-chairs, coordinating lead authors and review editors to ensure the consistency of messages to policymakers, their scientific advisers and the media. Messaging would need to respect the bounds set for the Platform's reports, namely, that they should be policy-relevant but not policy-prescriptive. It would therefore be an essential quality of the Platform's work that messaging and reports should remain policy-neutral and maintain scientific balance.

16. In addition, a number of overarching key messages explaining what the Platform is actually doing would need to be agreed upon and be used in all materials for the media or events attended by different audiences. The focus of these messages would be to explain the process and its legitimacy,

shedding light on such notions as “global consensus”, “peer review”, “highest-quality science” and others.

17. Although by no means exhaustive, the list below suggests some overarching messages that could be used to illustrate the Platform’s added value and role among all audiences that are not familiar with its operations:

- (a) The Platform is the authoritative body which provides state-of-the-art reports on key aspects of biodiversity and ecosystem services, in response to requests from policymakers;
- (b) The Platform does not duplicate existing work but adds value to the wide range of organizations already working in this field by filling gaps and building upon their work;
- (c) The Platform is unique in that it aims to strengthen the capacity for the effective use of science in decision-making at all levels;
- (d) The Platform is scientifically independent and ensures credibility, relevance and legitimacy through the peer review of its work and transparency in its decision-making processes for the exchange, sharing and use of data, information and technologies from all relevant sources;
- (e) The Platform recognizes and respects the contribution of indigenous and local knowledge to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems;
- (f) The Platform recognizes the unique biodiversity and scientific knowledge of regions, and also the need for the full and effective participation of developing countries and for balanced regional representation and participation in its structure and work;
- (g) The Platform takes an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach that incorporates all relevant disciplines, including social and natural sciences.

## **VI. Areas of activity**

### **A. Day-to-day communications**

18. The Platform secretariat could provide information and regular updates about its deliverables, events and activities through its website, social media accounts, presentations, and so forth. A list of all the suggested activities that could be undertaken by the secretariat as of 2015 and a timeline are set out in the annex to the present note.

### **B. Launch of assessment reports**

19. Two assessments reports will be launched at the fourth session of the Plenary: first, the thematic assessment of pollination and pollinators associated with food production and, second, the methodological assessment of scenarios and modelling of biodiversity and ecosystem services. More assessment reports will follow. There will be a short period, likely lasting three months, of sustained and concentrated interest in each of the reports all over the world. It is essential that the Platform be well prepared for this.

20. The launch of assessment reports will be a period of heightened interest in the Platform’s work from the media, policymakers and other stakeholders. The Platform’s key strategic objectives at these periods of heightened activity would be, first, to maintain vigorous, accurate and sustained press coverage; second, to coordinate and control messaging that is kept strictly within the bounds set for the Platform’s reports, namely, that they should be policy relevant, not policy prescriptive; and, third, to meet the requests made by end users – in particular, policymakers and scientific and technical experts in government and the private sector – for the conduct of seminars, briefings and meetings.

21. To promote the findings of the assessment reports it would be important to develop an outreach strategy and mount a media relations campaign, including press releases, social media and website announcements, press conferences, messaging, speeches and speaking notes and others.

22. To be effective and to have the required impact, it is recommended that the Platform appoint a communications consulting firm a few months prior to the launch of the assessment reports to handle the increased volume of activities and products that would need to be developed and disseminated. This recommendation is in line with similar practices adopted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which has enlisted the help of communications consulting firms during peak periods. Such an appointment could be covered by the communications budget allocated for each assessment and it would only take effect during the peak periods before, during and after the launch of assessment reports. The consulting firm could work under the supervision of the Bureau and the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and in collaboration with the communications officer of the secretariat.

23. Communicating the results of the Platform's assessments will be a challenging task because of the range and complexity of scientific issues and the increasing need to reach audiences beyond scientists and Governments. With the help of a communications consulting firm, clear messages could be crafted for different audiences. Furthermore, trained science writers could translate technical language into text suitable for mass communication or design web pages that explain scientific concepts to lay audiences without misconstruing or distorting the evidence underpinning those concepts.

24. As the assessment on pollination and pollinators will be one of the first two reports to be launched, it could be used as a model for the activities and products needed prior, during and after each assessment report. A timeline of suggested activities is set out below, in the annex to the present note.

## VII. Evaluation

25. The evaluation process could comprise three stages:

(a) *Perception surveys*. One survey targeting primary and broader audiences would be conducted each year to gauge perceptions about the Platform and its work;

(b) *Focus group discussions*. To measure the effectiveness of the communications and outreach strategy, focus group discussions could be held at key stages of the campaign as it progresses. These discussions could be held during major events or targeted at specific audiences, such as policymakers;

(c) *Media content monitoring*. Press coverage in websites, newspapers and magazines, and scientific publications could be continuously monitored.

## Annex

### Implementation plan

1. The implementation plan provides further details about the activities that could be implemented under the two key areas of communications: first, day-to-day communications and, second, the launch of assessment reports.

#### A. Day-to-day communications

2. As of 2015, the secretariat proposes developing the following products and undertaking the following activities:

(a) *Needs analysis.* This will be conducted as part of the draft revised stakeholder engagement strategy, which is submitted to the Plenary in document IPBES/3/16. The findings of this assessment will also be valuable for communications planning purposes;

(b) *Website revamp.* A large-scale project to be undertaken by the secretariat will be the revamping of the Platform's website. The aim will be to create a user-friendly and intuitive website with a contemporary and fresh look and feel;

(c) *Information and communication technology tools.* The secretariat will use information and communications technology tools, which will provide an opportunity for dialogue and communication to the Platform's bodies (Bureau and Multidisciplinary Expert Panel), task forces and expert groups. Such information and communications technology tools will facilitate file-sharing and collaboration online, along with videoconferencing services;

(d) *Visual identity.* With the help of professional graphic designers, a consistent corporate visual identity for all communications products and activities of the Platform, including its website, presentations, fact sheets, publications and other outputs, could be developed;

(e) *Presentations.* Once the visual style guide has been developed, professional and visually appealing presentations could also be developed promoting the work of the Platform;

(f) *Fact sheets.* One-page fact sheets presenting the Platform's work could also be created using the same visual style guide. Where practicable, these fact sheets can be made available in all six official United Nations languages;

(g) *Social media.* A social media strategy could also be developed to promote opportunities for participation in the Platform's work. Accounts for the Platform will be created on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube providing updates about the Platform's work;

(h) *FAQ web page.* This will be created on the revamped website providing key messages to explain why the Platform has been set up, how it adds value to the current array of initiatives, how it operates and under which principles;

(i) *Events and outreach.* An interactive calendar with Platform events could be included in the revamped website;

(j) *Translations.* Where practicable, translations of key communications products will be made available in all six official United Nations languages;

(k) *Wikipedia.* The Platform's webpage on Wikipedia will be updated after major events, such as sessions of the Plenary and the launching of assessment reports;

(l) *Annual survey.* A survey to gauge stakeholder perceptions will be conducted each year.

Table 1  
**Timeline of communications activities**

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
Needs assessment	Completion by April 2015
Website revamp	January–April 2015
Information and communications technology tools	Procurement by April 2015
Visual identity	Completion by June 2015
Presentations	Completion by July 2015
Fact sheets	Completion by August 2015
Social media	Throughout the year
FAQ web page	Completion by June 2015
Events and outreach	Throughout the year
Translations	Completion by November 2015
Wikipedia	Updated regularly
Annual survey	Completed in October each year

## B. Launch of assessment reports

3. As the thematic assessment on pollination and pollinators will be one of the first two reports to be launched, it could be used as a model for the activities and products needed prior, during and after each assessment report. A timeline of activities could be used as a model for the launch of the assessment reports that will follow.

Table 2  
**Timeline of launch-related activities**

<i>Activities prior, during and after the launch of the thematic assessment on pollination and pollinators</i>	<i>October 2015</i>	<i>November 2015</i>	<i>December 2015</i>	<i>January 2016</i>	<i>February 2016</i>	<i>March 2016</i>
Publications						
Supporting materials						
Derivative products						
Dedicated conference						
Special events, briefings, side events						
Speaker opportunities						
Online Q and A sessions with experts						
Rapid response plan						
Spokespersons						
Media training						
List of influential media						
Media monitoring						
Marketing						
Mailing lists						
Press conferences						
Interviews						