

Africa Group Statement

We want to acknowledge in absentia the

Honourable Prime Minister of Malaysia

Honourable Minister of Natural Resources and Environment

Chair of IPBES

Bureau and MEP

Executive Secretary of IPBES

Distinguished delegates

Africa would like to start by giving sincere thanks to the government and the people of Malaysia for their warm hospitality.

Africa expresses ~~ss would also like to~~ incere thanks to Prof Zakri for his leadership in growing the IPBES from its infancy to the mature platform that it has become. It is certainly wonderful and most befitting for him to finish his term as the first chair of IPBES on his home soil. This couldn't have been a better tribute to him for his outstanding contribution to this platform.

We also wish to thank governments that supported the participation of developing country delegates in this important meeting.

Africa wants to acknowledge and appreciate the road we have travelled together as member states of IPBES, working with our partners, stakeholders and observers, to be where we are today. It feels like it was just yesterday when we took the historic decision to establish this platform. We are now confident that we know the form and shape of this platform. We have a strong and solid work programme that has guided our work and has kept us focused on the

business that informed the establishment of this platform in the first place. The member states of IPBES and our partners should be very proud of this achievement.

Chair, it is important to also note that there is still a lot of work ahead for the platform. In recognition of this fact, the Africa group supports the proposed agenda in order to ensure that we move efficiently towards the adoption of the reports and summaries for policy makers ~~from and adopt the decisions for the initiation offer~~ the fast track assessments that will be presented to this plenary.

Another critical consideration, Chair, is the fact that the elements of the work programme are at different stages of implementation. While we focus our energies on pursuing consensus on how we achieve progress in this meeting, we need to acknowledge the role played by the secretariat, the TSUs and all the experts who have contributed to the various elements of the work programme. Further, Chair, we commend the expert leadership provided by the MEP.

Chair, at the risk of sounding like I am patting myself on the back, Africa commends the Bureau for their leadership of the platform – especially noting that this is the final plenary of the current Bureau. This critical phase in the growth and development of the platform would not have been possible without the able leadership of the MEP and Bureau and the excellent contribution of the various IPBES structures (plenary, the secretariat) as well as the ~~experts,~~ stakeholders and other partners.

Chair, Africa continues to support the platform in ensuring that there are synergies with other processes and between the various task forces. The work of the platform cannot be achieved only by the task forces working independently of each other and of the various assessments.

Capacity building is a cross cutting need for all assessments. Chair, we note the fact that the various regions are not equally endowed with capacity to undertake assessments and strongly support efforts that focus on closing capacity gaps. This is not a once off event and cannot be achieved by a couple of workshops. Our capacity building efforts must be robust as proposed by the capacity building task force and approved by the previous plenary.

As we implement the assessments, there are emerging issues some of which we never anticipated before the start of the assessments, such as the challenges around web based seminars and e-conferences. These are cost curtailing initiatives. Although commendable, they need to be complemented by providing the seminars in flash disks to all the regions where internet access and internet speeds are a challenge. Workshops must be organized to complement virtual platforms especially for complex issues such as **sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services**.

Finally Chair, Africa is keen to see the deliberations planned for this plenary start and looks forward to a successful week ahead. **Thank you.**