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**Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy  
Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services****Sixth session**

Medellin, Colombia, 18–24 March 2018

Item 10 of the provisional agenda\*

**Review of the Platform****Review of the effectiveness of the administrative and scientific  
functions of the Platform (deliverable 4 (e))****Note by the secretariat****Introduction**

1. As part of the first work programme of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the Plenary, in decision IPBES-2/5, mandated a review of the effectiveness of the administrative and scientific functions of IPBES (deliverable 4 (e)), and requested the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, in consultation with the Bureau, to develop a procedure for that review. At its fourth session, the Plenary considered a draft procedure for the review and requested the further refinement of the scope and terms of reference (decision IPBES-4/1, section VII).
2. At its fifth session, the Plenary adopted decision IPBES-5/2, in which it approved the terms of reference for the review (set out in the annex to the decision).
3. In the same decision, the Plenary requested the Bureau, in consultation with the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, taking into account comments received at the fifth session of the Plenary, to revise the questionnaire set out in the appendix to the terms of reference; requested the secretariat to make the revised questionnaire available to members and stakeholders of IPBES for review for a period of two weeks after the fifth session of the Plenary; and requested the Bureau, in consultation with the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, to finalize the questionnaire, taking into account the comments received during the two-week period.
4. The Plenary also approved the execution of an internal review by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau and transmission of its conclusions to the external reviewers. It requested the internal review team to provide the report called for in paragraph 11 of the terms of reference to the Plenary at its sixth session.
5. The Plenary also requested the Executive Secretary to call for the nomination of candidates for the review panel, with a view to ensuring regional representation, and to conduct a competitive bidding process for an external professional organization to coordinate the review, with a view to initiation of the work of the organization by the beginning of 2018, subject to the availability of financial resources. The Plenary requested the review panel, in accordance with the terms of reference, to provide a final report on

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\* IPBES/6/1.

the review, including recommendations on the implementation of the second work programme of IPBES, to the Plenary at its seventh session.

## **I. Report of the internal review team**

### **A. Finalization of the questionnaire**

6. At their eighth meeting, the Bureau and the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel agreed on the composition of an internal review team. The team comprises the IPBES Chair, a member of the Bureau (Alfred Oteng-Yeboah), a co-chair and two members of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (Marie Stenseke, Carlos Joly and Vinod Mathur) and the Executive Secretary.

7. In response to decision IPBES-5/2, the internal review team, on behalf of the Bureau and the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, revised the questionnaire set out in the appendix to the annex to decision IPBES-5/2, and made it available for comments to IPBES members and stakeholders for a period of two weeks (28 April–12 May 2017). 16 sets of comments were received, including from 4 governments (Australia, Malaysia, Nepal, United States of America), the European Union and 11 individuals. The internal review committee finalized the questionnaire, taking these comments into account. The final version of the questionnaire is contained in appendix V to the annex to document IPBES/6/INF/32.

8. According to paragraph 11 of the terms of reference, the internal element of the review consists of a self-assessment based on the responses to the questionnaire by former and current members of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and Bureau; the secretariat, including the technical support units; members of IPBES task forces; co-chairs and coordinating lead authors of completed and ongoing IPBES assessments; and national focal points. The questionnaire was made available on 22 May 2017, with a deadline of 7 August 2017 for response. The questionnaire was completed by a total of 85 people, including 9 members of the Bureau, 23 members of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, 21 national focal points, 17 IPBES experts (co-chairs of task forces and assessments; coordinating lead authors of assessments, and a small number of task force members and assessment lead authors that were invited to participate in a different capacity and 17 members of the secretariat (including members of technical support units). Some respondents provided their submissions in more than one capacity.

### **B. Preparation of the internal review report**

9. In response to the request by the Plenary, the internal review team prepared the report called for in paragraph 11 of the terms of reference of the review (annex to decision IPBES-5/2) comprising a self-assessment based on the responses to the questionnaire. The report was endorsed by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau.

10. The report includes an executive summary, which presents the key outcomes of the internal review as prepared by the internal review committee and endorsed by the Bureau and the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel. Statements in bold font result directly from the quantitative analysis of the questionnaire, while text in normal font originates from additional comments received via the questionnaire and includes aspects that the internal review committee chose to highlight based on the experience of its members. The executive summary is reproduced in the annex to the present note.

11. The report also contains a detailed, section-by-section analysis of the questionnaire, including considerations for the future highlighted by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and Bureau. The full report is available in document IPBES/6/INF/32. Appendix I to the report contains information on the mandate, process and methods regarding the internal review. Appendix II provides for each of the 99 questions of the questionnaire that allowed for a ranking, the percentage of responses received for each of the ratings 1–5, a column chart illustrating the number of responses received for each of the ratings 1–5, and the mean with standard deviation. For the seven questions for which the responses were limited to “yes” or “no”, appendix II provides the percentages of responses (“yes” or “no”) received, the number of responses received and a pie chart for each question illustrating the responses. Appendix III lists the aspects of the work of IPBES that received the highest and lowest overall ratings in the questionnaire. Appendix IV provides a summary overview of qualitative comments received as part of the questionnaire. Appendix V provides the final questionnaire used as the basis for the internal review.

## II. External element of the review

12. In decision IPBES-5/2, the Plenary requested the Executive Secretary to call for the nomination of candidates for the review panel, with a view to ensuring regional representation, and to conduct a competitive bidding process for an external professional organization to coordinate the review with a view to initiation of the work of the organization by the beginning of 2018, subject to the availability of financial resources.

13. On 6 November, the Executive Secretary issued notifications EM/2017/31 and EM/2017/32, calling, by 2 January 2018, for nominations for members of the IPBES review panel and for expressions of interest from professional organizations to coordinate the external element of the IPBES review. The call had been developed by the Bureau working with the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel based on the terms of reference for the review set out in the annex to decision IPBES-5/2.

14. The review panel will comprise no more than 10 reviewers with a balanced composition of government representatives, scientists and representatives of non-governmental organizations. The members of the panel will be selected, in response to the call, by the Bureau in consultation with the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, guided by the following criteria, as set out in paragraph 9 of the terms of reference:

(a) Relevant qualifications of the organization and the reviewers to conduct institutional reviews at the global level;

(b) Demonstrated track record of the organization and the reviewers in working with science-policy interfaces and in understanding the roles and functions of a global environmental assessment process in general and of IPBES in particular.

15. The Bureau and the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel will also select, guided by these criteria, an external professional organization in response to the call. The secretariat working with the Bureau will review the proposals and if no proposals meet the criteria or fall within the financial resources available, the Bureau may choose to hire an administrative officer located outside of the secretariat to coordinate the review.

16. Following a decision of the Bureau at its tenth meeting, the trust fund will not be used for any expenditure relating to the external review, pending the further consideration by the Plenary of the revised budget for 2018 that it approved at its fifth session. More specifically, the trust fund has not been used to support the participation of the members of the review panel at the sixth session of the Plenary and the secretariat has not entered into contractual arrangements with an external professional organization. The following budgetary requirements are included in the terms of reference for the review (decision IPBES-5/2, annex).

<i>Item</i>	<i>Cost in United States dollars</i>
Administrative support	63 160
Travel support plus daily subsistence allowance for 10 people to attend the sixth session of the Plenary	37 500
Travel support plus daily subsistence allowance for 10 people to attend the eleventh meetings of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau	37 500
Travel support plus daily subsistence allowance for 10 people to attend the twelfth meetings of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau	37 500
Travel support plus daily subsistence allowance for two reviewers to attend the seventh session of the Plenary	7 500
Honorariums for reviewers	Not included
<b>Total</b>	<b>183 160</b>

17. Information on the outcomes of the selection processes will be made available in background document IPBES/6/INF/33.

### **III. Suggested action**

18. The Plenary may wish:

To take note with appreciation of the report prepared by the internal review team, the selection of a review panel to perform the review and the progress made in the selection of an external professional organization to coordinate the review.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> IPBES/6/10.

## Annex

### Executive summary: key outcomes of the internal review

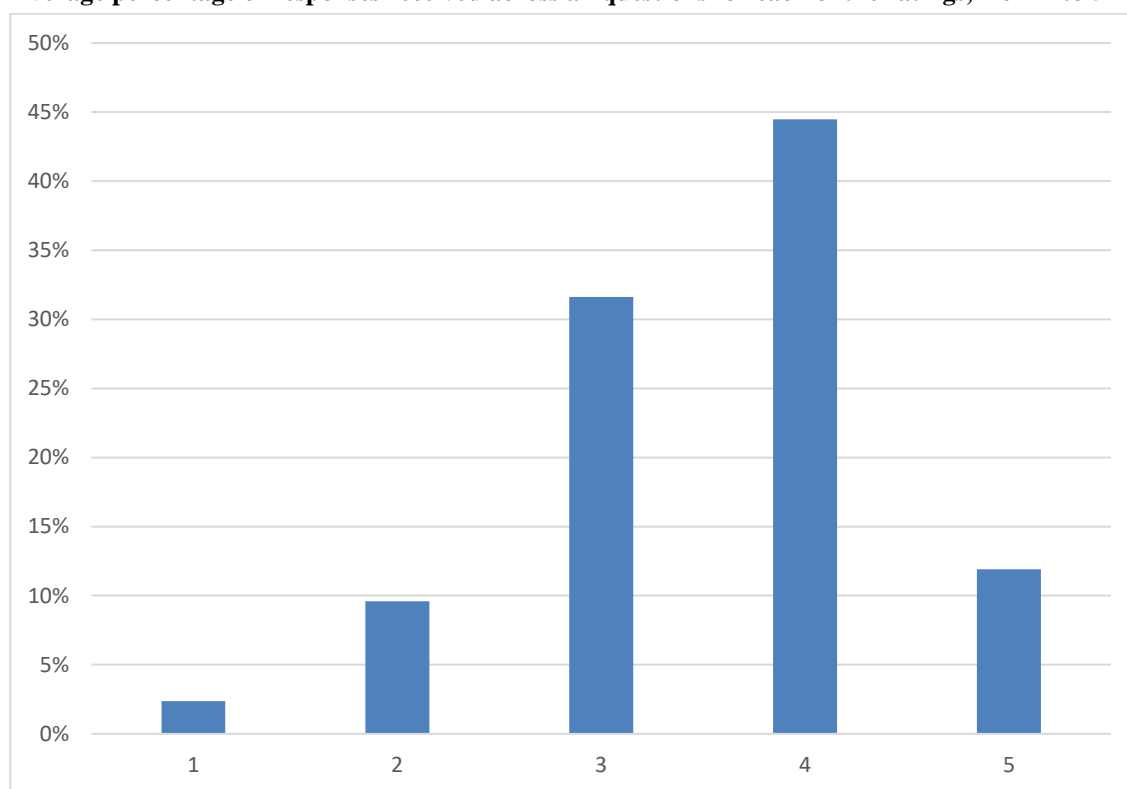
#### I. General overall conclusion

1. The internal review analysed IPBES according to the terms of reference of the review with regard to its effectiveness and efficiency, measured against its current objectives, operating principles, four functions and administrative and scientific processes for implementing the work programme, the efficiency of the delivery of the work programme and established support structures, the procedures for the preparation of IPBES deliverables and other relevant decisions by the IPBES Plenary.

2. The internal review found that IPBES is, overall, functioning well with an overall average rating of 3.5 out of 5 (see figure 1), while there is potential for improvement in a number of areas.

Figure 1

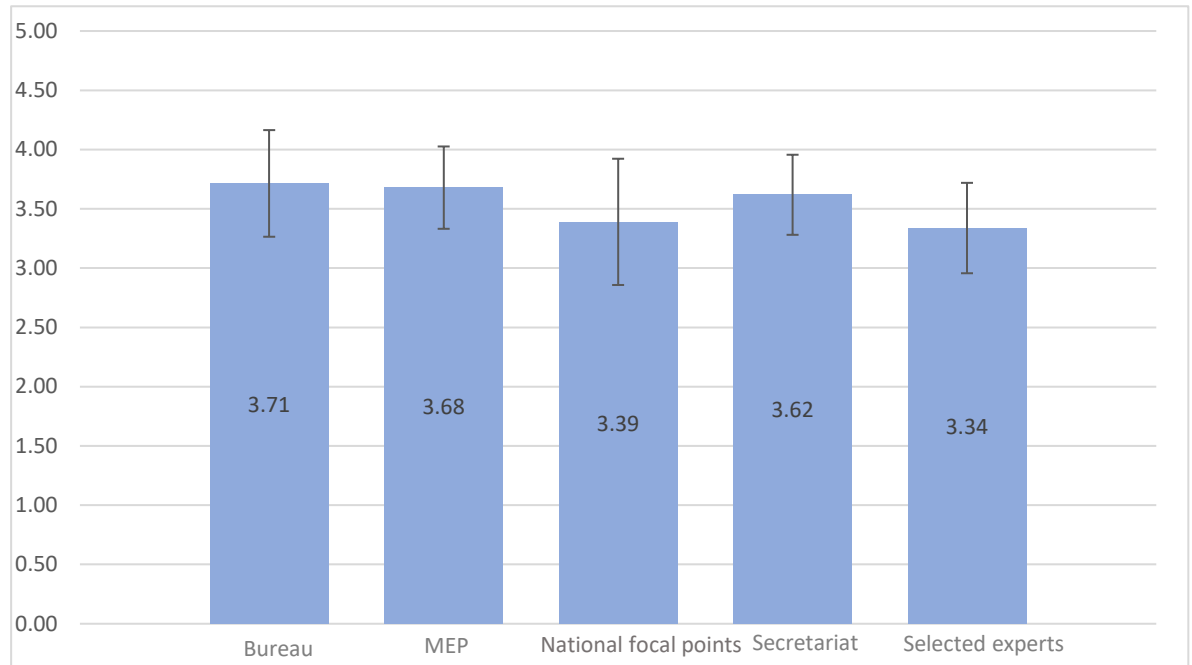
**Average percentage of responses received across all questions for each of the ratings, from 1 to 5**



3. Only minor differences may be observed in the overall ratings between the five categories of respondents: members of the subsidiary bodies of IPBES (49 responses) and of the secretariat and IPBES national focal points or experts that are part of the IPBES task forces and expert groups (38 responses; see figure 2).

Figure 2

**Average response across all questions given by each category of respondents: members of the Bureau, Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, secretariat, including technical support units, IPBES national focal points and selected experts (co-chairs of task forces and expert groups and coordinating lead authors of assessments)**



## II. Implementation of the work programme 2014–2018

4. **The scoping processes for assessments are considered to have worked well, with the exception of the assessment of the sustainable use of wild species, where scoping such a complex issue via remote means was understood to be inappropriate.** More policy experts should be involved in the scoping processes to ensure the relevance of assessments to policymakers. **The summaries for policymakers of the pollination and scenarios and models assessments were well received** and future summaries for policymakers should be similar in length or shorter. **In general, the management committees of the assessments undertaken thus far are considered to have fulfilled their role.**

5. **In order to enable IPBES to improve in such areas as its interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach, gender equity and balanced regional representation and participation in its structure and work,** the nominations of experts by Governments and organizations should include a higher number of experts with a background in social sciences and humanities, policy-making, female experts, experts on indigenous and local knowledge and experts from Eastern Europe and Africa.

6. **The scientific independence, credibility, relevance and legitimacy of IPBES assessments would benefit from increased input and comments in the peer-review process,** in particular from Governments. The regional dialogue meetings with IPBES national focal points, which were organized under the rolling plan for capacity-building in the context of the third author meetings for the land degradation and restoration assessment and the regional assessments, were well received and could also be considered for future assessment processes as a way of assisting Governments in providing input and comments.

7. Unlike the assessment function, which was implemented on the basis of a set of agreed procedures, implementation of the capacity-building, knowledge generation and policy support tools and methodologies functions, including the establishment of links with other initiatives and organizations, required the establishment of a procedural and institutional foundation. As a result, implementation of these functions has generally been slower, but has been improving recently with relevant procedures being established.

8. **The usefulness of the catalogue of policy support tools, which includes the catalogues for assessments, was rated, on average, as fair.** The catalogue is at an early stage of development, however, and a conclusive assessment of its usefulness is therefore not possible at this point in time. Furthermore, progress was limited by the funds allocated to support this deliverable. Implementation of this function of IPBES is not only achieved through the development of the catalogue for policy support tools, but also through the assessment function, in particular the methodological assessment of scenarios and models and the development of the preliminary guide on values and related work.

9. At its fifth session, the Plenary welcomed the capacity-building rolling plan that has since been guiding capacity-building activities. **The fellowship programme has been well received. The performance of the capacity-building forum was rated overall as “fair”** and its structure may need to evolve. The regional dialogue meetings were well received; their performance may be further improved by holding them earlier in the peer review process.

10. **Aspects of the work on knowledge and data are considered overall as “fair”**, and work contributing to this function should be enhanced in the future. Where catalysing the generation of new knowledge is concerned, only limited activities have taken place to date, while knowledge gaps are being identified in the light of the assessments.

11. **Aspects of the work related to recognizing, respecting and adequately addressing indigenous and local knowledge were considered overall as “good” or between “fair” and “good”.** This work is considered to have been advanced in a major way through the adoption, by the Plenary at its fifth session, of the approach to recognizing and working with indigenous and local knowledge. Its implementation, including through the participatory mechanism, is expected to advance this work still further in the future. The involvement of indigenous and local knowledge holders in IPBES activities should be increased.

12. **Synergies between the four functions of IPBES are considered to be an area in need of improvement. The allocation of the budget among the various deliverables of IPBES was considered “fair”.** Synergies and balance between the four functions are an important consideration for the development of the second work programme.

### III. Functioning of the Plenary, Bureau, Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and secretariat, including technical support units

13. **Sessions of the Plenary are considered to be well organized and conducted in an effective manner, with appropriate information and documentation, and decisions of the Plenary are considered to be effectively implemented by the secretariat, Bureau and Multidisciplinary Expert Panel. Advice to the Plenary on coordination between IPBES and other relevant institutions could be improved.**

14. **The Bureau has effectively discharged its mandate in implementing the administrative functions of IPBES, although it could improve its role in identifying donors and developing partnership arrangements for the implementation of activities of IPBES. Bureau members have effectively conducted their roles related to chairing and contributing to task forces, expert groups and assessment management committees. Members of IPBES and regional groups have been supported by their respective Bureau members to differing degrees.**

15. **The Multidisciplinary Expert Panel has effectively discharged its mandate in implementing the scientific functions of IPBES, although it could improve its role in engaging the scientific community and other knowledge holders with the work programme. Members of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel have effectively fulfilled their roles related to chairing and contributing to task forces and expert groups.** The close interactions between the Bureau and the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel benefited the work of both bodies and should continue in the future.

16. The secretariat has been very effective, in particular given that it was significantly understaffed for a long while. **It has ensured good documentation and that sessions of the Plenary and subsidiary bodies have been well organized, it has been responsive to Plenary requests and to national focal points interessionally, and it has provided good support for delivery of the work programme.** The effectiveness of the technical support units has been variable, with some very good, while others improved over the course of the first work programme. **The appropriateness of the size, composition and set-up**

of the secretariat, including its technical support units, is considered “fair”; for the second work programme it is important to match the size of the work programme with adequate resources at the secretariat.

#### **IV. Functioning of the task forces and expert groups**

17. **Interactions between the task forces, expert groups and assessments are considered in need of improvement. The capacity-building task group and the expert groups on scenarios and models and values have worked well. The work of other expert groups was considered “fair”.** While the generation of the sets of indicators has been important, the time to develop them made them less useful for the regional assessments and the land degradation and restoration assessment.

#### **V. Partnerships, stakeholder engagement and communication**

18. Collaboration with partners within the United Nations system and with other relevant organizations, initiatives and networks has progressed but overall **collaboration is considered to be an area in need of improvement. Stakeholder engagement, outreach and communication are considered to need strengthening**, while it is acknowledged that a recent recruitment has significantly strengthened the communications and outreach activities. The visibility of IPBES needs to extend beyond ministries of environment.

#### **VI. Effectiveness of budgetary management and financial rules**

19. **Given the tight budgetary situation, it was recognized that there is a need to step up fundraising activities. The financial rules are considered to have been observed well, and the budget documents presented to the Plenary are adequate.** Significant amounts of in-kind contributions have been obtained, reducing pressures on the IPBES trust fund.

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