

UNITED  
NATIONS



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



**BES**

IPBES/7/INF/16



**Intergovernmental Science-Policy  
Platform on Biodiversity and  
Ecosystem Services**

Distr.: General  
26 March 2019

English only

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

**Seventh session**

Paris, 29 April–4 May 2019

Item 5 of the provisional agenda\*

**Report of the Executive Secretary on the implementation  
of the first work programme for the period 2014–2018**

## **Implementation of the conflict-of-interest policy for the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services**

### **Note by the secretariat**

In its decision IPBES-3/3, on procedures for the preparation of Platform deliverables, the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services adopted the conflict-of-interest policy and implementation procedures set out in annex II to that decision. The annex to the present note, which is presented without formal editing, provides information on the progress made in implementing the policy, along with a report to the Plenary by the Committee on Conflicts of Interest on its activities, which the Committee submitted in accordance with rule 10 of the implementation procedures.

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\* IPBES/7/1/Rev.1.

## Annex

### Composition of the Committee on Conflicts of Interest

1. A Committee on Conflicts of Interest was established in 2015, following the third session of the Plenary, in accordance with rule 10 of the conflict-of-interest policy and implementation procedures. Following election of the new Bureau at the fourth session of the Plenary, Robert Watson (Chair, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) stepped down from the Committee, and Alfred Oteng-Yeboah (Ghana, Bureau vice-chair for African Group) became chair of the Committee.
2. Following the departure of Kevin Joseph Cash, from Canada, from the Committee, after the fifth session, a call was issued to IPBES members on 11 January 2018 for candidates from the Western Europe and Others Group, with a deadline of 2 February 2018, and one nomination received for Jean-François Silvain, from France, who was selected by the Bureau.
3. Following the resignation from Diego Pacheco as member of the Bureau before the sixth session of the Plenary, the Bureau, at its 11th meeting, selected Ana Maria Hernandez (Colombia) as third member of the Bureau serving as member of the Committee.
4. The Committee is currently composed of the following 9 members:
  - (a) 3 Bureau members:
    - Alfred Oteng-Yeboah (Ghana), Chair
    - Ana Maria Hernandez (Colombia)
    - Rashad Allahverdiyev (Azerbaijan)
  - (b) 5 members, one per UN region:
    - Helena Nader (Brazil)
    - Jean-François Silvain (France)
    - Haigen Xu (China)
    - Kaouthar Tliche Aloui (Tunisia)
    - Nilay (Çabuk) Kaya (Turkey)
  - (c) 1 legal counsel:
    - Stadler Trengove, Principal Legal Officer, Law Division, UNEP, serving as the “additional member with appropriate legal expertise from, and appointed by, the organization hosting the secretariat” (rule 10).

### Actions taken

5. By the time of closing of the sixth session of the Plenary, all relevant individuals with the exception of 5 experts involved in the global assessment had submitted disclosure forms electronically through an online form (the form is set out in the appendix to annex II to decision IPBES-3/3) and the information provided in the forms had been reviewed by the Committee. No conflict was signalled either by an expert, or by a member of the Committee.
6. Since the sixth session of the Plenary, the disclosure forms of the remaining experts involved in the global assessment have been submitted. Furthermore, a call for nominations of experts for the assessment of the sustainable use of wild species and the assessment on values and a call for nominations of experts for the assessment of invasive alien species were launched. Nominees were requested to submit disclosure forms as part of the nomination process.
7. Members of the external review panel and representatives of the organization coordinating the review, the International Science Council, were also asked to submit disclosure forms in line with the terms of reference for the review (decision IPBES-5/2, annex, paragraph 6).
8. The secretariat compiled the responses received from selected experts and persons involved in the external review of IPBES and submitted to Committee members a summary spreadsheet of all submissions asking whether any conflict was identified. The disclosure forms of experts nominated for

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the assessment of invasive alien species will be submitted to the Committee once the selection process has further proceeded.

9. The Committee reviewed the compiled information, which on 26 March 2019 corresponded to 100% of the disclosure forms of selected experts, members of technical support units and persons involved in the external review. This does not include nominees for alternate members of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel to replace members of the Panel that have resigned since the sixth session of the Plenary. The Committee will review the forms of all nominees before the election in accordance with the conflict of interest policy and implementation procedures.

10. No teleconference was organised because no conflict was signalled either by an expert, or by a member of the Committee.

11. The Committee sent to the secretariat the letter set out in the appendix below for submission to the Plenary. The letter constitutes the Committee's report on its activities and is being submitted to the Plenary for information, pursuant to rule 10, paragraph 5, of the conflict of interest policy, according to which the Committee will submit a report on its activities to the Plenary at least four weeks prior to each session of the Plenary.

## Appendix

### **Report of the Committee on Conflicts of Interest to the Plenary on its activities**

Dear Governments and Observers

The Committee on Conflicts of interest has reviewed all conflict of interest forms submitted to date (26 March 2019), since the sixth session of the Plenary.

When examining an individual's conflict of interest (CoI) form, the Committee spent considerable time differentiating between "biases" and "conflict of interest". The IPBES Plenary (annex II to decision IPBES-3/3) defined a conflict of interest as any current interest of an individual that could either: (i) significantly impair the individual's objectivity in carrying out his or her duties and responsibilities for the Platform, or (ii) create an unfair advantage for any person or organization. Whereas bias, as defined in the IPBES policy on CoI, refers to a point of view or perspective that is strongly held by an individual regarding a particular issue or set of issues.

The strength of IPBES is to ensure that the experts involved in preparing the assessment reports (co-chairs, coordinating lead authors, lead authors and review editors) represent a wide range of experiences, views and perspectives. The Committee recognized that all experts, whether from academia, government, private sector or non-governmental organizations, have biases. This is part of human nature. As noted in the CoI policy, bias is managed through the selection of experts with a balance of perspectives, and through the peer review process.

The Committee reviewed all new forms since the sixth session and noted that none had signalled a conflict of interest.

The Committee did not find any conflicts of interests as defined in annex II of decision IPBES-3/3.

Alfred Oteng-Yeboah

Chair of the Committee on Conflict of Interest

On behalf of the Committee

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