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Item 8 of the provisional agenda\*

**Review of the Platform at the conclusion of its first  
work programme****Response by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau  
to the report on the review of the Platform at the end of its first  
work programme****Note by the secretariat**

1. As part of the first work programme of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the Plenary, in its decision IPBES-2/5, requested the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, in consultation with the Bureau, to develop a procedure for the review of the effectiveness of the administrative and scientific functions of IPBES.
2. In its decision IPBES-5/2, the Plenary approved the terms of reference for the review, including an internal and an external element. In the same decision, it requested the Executive Secretary to call for the nomination of candidates for the review panel and to conduct a competitive bidding process for an external professional organization to coordinate the review. The Plenary also requested the review panel, in accordance with the terms of reference, to provide a final report on the review, including recommendations on the implementation of the second work programme of IPBES, to the Plenary at its seventh session.
3. The report of the review panel on the review of the Platform at the end of its first work programme is set out in document IPBES/7/INF/18. The executive summary and recommendations of that report are set out in the annex to document IPBES/7/5. Activities already undertaken to implement recommendations arising from the internal report are set out in document IPBES/7/INF/17.
4. The annex to the present note, which is presented without formal editing, sets out the response to the review of the Platform by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau. The response by the Executive Secretary to the review of the Platform is set out in document IPBES/7/INF/20.

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\* IPBES/7/1.

## Annex

# Response by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau to the report on the review of the Platform at the end of its first work programme

## Introduction

The Bureau and the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) would like to thank the review panel for a very thorough and useful review of IPBES. The review panel reports many positive findings, but also recognizes that there are areas for improvement. The review panel's findings and recommendations provide significant food for thought. The Bureau and MEP endorse many of the findings and recommendations but disagree with others. This report summarizes the views of the Bureau and the MEP on the findings and recommendations and is written to assist the Plenary.

Many of the findings and recommendations are fully consistent with the internal review,<sup>1</sup> but they have clearly gone well beyond the more limited approach of the internal review and made excellent use of the "theory of change" concept. Many of the recommendations are already embedded in the draft work programme to be considered by Plenary at its 7<sup>th</sup> session (IPBES/7/6), e.g., more integration of the four IPBES functions, more emphasis on the policy aspects of assessments and other activities. Document IPBES/7/INF/17 summarizes activities already undertaken to implement recommendations arising from the internal report.

Many of the recommendations require action on the part of Governments and many require additional financial resources.

This paper is divided into three sections: (I) a summary of the review panel's positive findings and key concerns to provide context for the Bureau and MEP responses; (II) an executive summary of responses by MEP and Bureau to the review's recommendations; and (III) a detailed set of responses by MEP and Bureau to the review's findings and recommendations. The executive summary, by responding to the recommendations, implicitly addresses the underlying findings, whereas the detailed set of responses explicitly addresses the recommendations and most of the findings.

## I. The review panel's positive findings and key concerns

The positive findings of the review panel (verbatim quotes from the report) include:

1. IPBES has, in the seven years since its formal establishment and five years of active work, garnered considerable achievements to its name in the area of knowledge advancement in biodiversity and ecosystem services, despite an under-funded budget that is insufficient to support its ambitious but over-committed work programme;
2. IPBES has been built on a solid foundation and will continue to offer a strong value proposition for stakeholders over the next decade. In a crowded landscape, it has significant scientific credibility and a clearly defined and important niche as an intergovernmental platform working at the global science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services. It benefits from a wide sense of stakeholder ownership and several unique features that constitute major strengths;
3. IPBES has achieved much to date in establishing fully operational governance and operational structures, as well as the necessary rules of procedure. The performance and commitment of the IPBES secretariat and its technical support units are considered particular strengths;
4. IPBES has had impressive success in catalyzing the generation of new knowledge. The review panel is of the view that the volume of scientific assessments and associated summaries

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<sup>1</sup> See IPBES/6/INF/32.

for policymakers represent a large and important advance in global understanding of the status of and trends in biodiversity and ecosystem services;

5. Available resources have been effectively and efficiently managed, and the agreed ambitious work programme has been delivered within available resources. The realignment of financial resources to deliver the assessments amid funding challenges was particularly impressive;

6. IPBES has already made an important and positive contribution to understanding the root causes of biodiversity loss and ecosystem service degradation and has also had ripple effects in mobilizing academic groups and informal regional environmental and conservation coalitions. It appears to have had significant success in reaching global policy-makers.

Key concerns of the review panel include:

1. IPBES’ positioning for impact has been impeded by an early focus on producing scientific assessments, with the inherently challenging science-policy interface dimension not yet having been fully addressed, insufficient focus on an explicit strategy guided by a clearly formulated vision and mission and insufficient synergetic collaboration and partnerships;

2. IPBES continues to face challenges pertaining to its legal status; its gender, disciplinary (especially in the social sciences) and geographic balance; the appropriate inclusion of all knowledge systems; and ensuring that its governance bodies fulfill clear, essential and useful roles without unnecessary duplication;

3. The policy relevance and actionability of the assessments, especially at the national level can be improved. Progress has been uneven across the four functions, with the policy support function being the least successfully pursued and slow progress in the Platform’s complex yet very important capacity-building efforts. There have been significant and continuously improving efforts to incorporate indigenous and local knowledge into IPBES processes, yet improvements are still necessary, including in engaging productively with indigenous peoples and local communities and ensuring the participation of indigenous knowledge holders;

4. The lack of reliable long-term sources of income is of particular concern, and the financial sustainability of IPBES remains vulnerable to fluctuations in voluntary national contributions. The fundraising strategy is not yet convincing with regard to the level of innovation needed to address these concerns;

5. IPBES has to a lesser extent, reached national policymakers and scientists not directly linked to its work. It has been much less successful in reaching practitioners (*i.e.*, the implementers of conservation and development projects), and has yet to reach local policymakers, the private sector and citizens.

## II. Executive summary of the response by the MEP and the Bureau to the review panel’s recommendations

The response addresses all 36 recommendations, either separately or as small groups. In doing so, responses are implicitly addressing the underlying findings.

Recommendations by the review panel	Responses by the MEP and the Bureau
<b>Origins, conceptualization and positioning of IPBES</b>	
(1 and 2): IPBES needs a clearly defined, agreed and clearly articulated vision, mission and adaptive strategy, where the four functions of IPBES are seen and managed as an integrated set.	The Bureau and MEP agree that a clearly defined, agreed and clearly articulated vision, mission and adaptive strategy could be a useful complement to the work programme. The Bureau and MEP also agree that the four functions of IPBES, <i>i.e.</i> , knowledge generation, assessments, capacity-building and policy support, could and should be managed as an integrated set, together with communications and outreach activities, and all support the science-policy interface. This was also identified in the internal review and is the intent of the draft work programme up to 2030. When assessments are scoped, the document should identify the capacity-building, policy support tools and knowledge

<b>Origins, conceptualization and positioning of IPBES</b>	
	generation activities associated with it, and how they support the science-policy interface.
(3 and 4): IPBES should develop a clearer, more strategic and strengthened approach to stakeholders and partnerships, allowing for differentiation of status.	Bureau and MEP would like to acknowledge that significant progress has been made in developing different types of partnerships, but that this work can be further strengthened. The next work programme shows that there is now a differentiation of partner status with four categories of partners: (i) the four UN partners; (ii) the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs); (iii) a limited set of strategic partners that have a direct collaboration with IPBES; and (iv) a larger set of “collaborative supporters”, who contribute, through their own work.
<b>Governance, structure and procedures</b>	
(5): The exact legal status of IPBES should be clarified and communicated.	The legal status was well-defined during the negotiations of IPBES, namely IPBES is an independent intergovernmental body, with the Plenary of IPBES being the decision-making body, and UNEP providing the secretariat.
(6 and 10): Modalities and procedures should be re-examined in order to achieve an appropriate segregation of duties and ensure scientific independence, with a more streamlined governance architecture. For example, Bureau and MEP should not be involved in the preparation of the SPM to ensure it is not politicized.	<p>The Bureau and MEP fully endorse the principle of scientific independence, which is essential for the credibility and legitimacy of IPBES. The Bureau and MEP have organized their meetings in a way to avoid overlaps, by holding their meetings in parallel, including both separate and joint sessions. In the opinion of Bureau and MEP, the collaborative working relationship is a very positive and efficient feature of the IPBES governance structure and does not undermine scientific independence.</p> <p>The Bureau and MEP disagree that the involvement of Bureau and MEP in the preparation of the summary for policymakers (SPM), per the rules and procedures, politicizes the SPM. They assert that their intellectual input and their dialogue with co-chairs and coordinating lead authors (CLAs) is a key component in the endeavor of advancing the science-policy interface and that this contributes to the policy relevance and balance and usefulness of the key messages and main findings of the SPMs.</p>
(7, 8 and 9): IPBES should supplement the principle of “policy-relevant, but not policy prescriptive” with principles of co-design, co-production and co-implementation to strengthen the policy dimensions of IPBES and strengthen the capacity to work at the Science Policy interface. There is a need to diversify different kinds of expertise (in particular the policy dimensions of IPBES) and improve the quality of experts. This could be facilitated by establishing national IPBES committees.	The Bureau and MEP agree with these recommendations but would note that IPBES procedures already embody considerable co-design, co-production and co-implementation. The intent of the next work programme is to involve a wider range of expertise and disciplines, and of people who understand and have experience with the policy process. However, to date, requests to nominate policy experts and practitioners for assessments, in particular at the scoping stage, have not always been heard by Governments and stakeholders. The suggestion to establish national IPBES committees or platforms is one that has long been promoted by Bureau, MEP and secretariat, and they will continue to do so.

<b>Governance, structure and procedures</b>	
(11): The current rules of procedure need to be checked for relevance, potentially updated, and made more accessible.	Implementing some of the review panel's recommendations may require that some of the rules of procedure be modified. The policies and procedures are accessible and located under "policies and procedures" on the IPBES web site ( <a href="https://www.ipbes.net/document-library-categories/policies-and-procedures">https://www.ipbes.net/document-library-categories/policies-and-procedures</a> ).
(12 and 13): The secretariat should be better resourced, administrative procedures streamlined, and the role of TSUs given greater recognition.	The Bureau and MEP can confirm that the secretariat does an incredible job given how under-resourced it is. Therefore, a key issue for Plenary is to match secretariat funding with expectations. The need for appropriate recognition for the technical support units (TSUs) and other partners and for in-kind contributing supporting members of the MEP, Bureau and experts is important for the long-term sustainability of a highly collaborative entity like IPBES. Many of the recommended options for improving the recognition of TSUs are in effect, but further efforts may be needed.
(14): IPBES should develop comprehensive guidance on NFP roles and good practice, recognizing that each country should define their own modalities.	Bureau and MEP recognize that IPBES national focal points (NFPs) have an incredibly important role in ensuring the success of IPBES. If deemed useful a guidance document could be developed, beyond that currently available. Given the range of functions demanded of NFPs, their work could be greatly assisted by multi-stakeholder national IPBES committees or platforms that they would chair.
<b>Implementation of the first work programme</b>	
(15): Align the ambitions and scope of the work programme with the budget and human resources.	Bureau and MEP fully agree with this recommendation. However, as noted in the budget document to be debated in Plenary, a viable work programme requires an annual trust fund budget of \$8.7 million for 2019-23 (the average for the first work programme was \$8.5 million during the period 2014-18). If the annual financial contributions from Governments and the European Union continue at their present rate of about \$5.5million, then no work programme is viable.
(16, 18): IPBES should take a more holistic approach to assessments, and must strengthen significantly the policy dimensions of its work, with policy relevance at national and local levels framing all aspects of IPBES assessments, which should (i) include practitioners, e.g., managers of biodiversity assets in its activities; (ii) develop the capacity to understand how the policy process works; (iii) assess the effectiveness of policies; (iv) generate policy choices within the assessments, that are more closely policy prescriptive; and (v) develop simple and compelling arguments for actionable evidence, tools	<p>The Bureau and MEP agree that the policy dimensions of IPBES can and should be strengthened in a number of ways. As suggested in the next work programme, assessment scoping and preparation processes should involve a wider range of expertise and disciplines, and of experts who understand and have experience with the policy process, thus allowing for co-design and co-production, giving greater emphasis to the policy response options sections.</p> <p>The review panel recommends that the SPMs be more prescriptive and recommends actionable policy options, at all spatial scales. This is, however, inconsistent with the operating principles of the Platform, which states that the Platform should "provide policy-relevant information, but not policy-prescriptive advice". The decision whether to have policy recommendations in the SPM or not lies with the Plenary.</p> <p>Bureau and MEP fully agree that the assessments need to assess the effectiveness of policies, and develop simple and compelling arguments for actionable evidence, tools and options to a range of public and private decision-makers. This should be facilitated given the fact that the proposed work programme up to 2030 places IPBES activities within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the post 2020 biodiversity framework and the 2050 vision for biodiversity. The proposed work programme up to 2030 has prioritized three topics that should emphasize policy options, including an evaluation of their effectiveness, and provide</p>

<b>Implementation of the first work programme</b>	
and options to a range of public and private decision-makers.	compelling arguments for conserving and sustainably using biodiversity and ecosystems.
(16): IPBES assessments should be managed as a process rather than an end-product, with greater emphasis on cross-disciplinary, cross-specialist, cross-sector co-production across multiple knowledge systems. Other relevant IPBES deliverables and processes such as policy support tools and methodologies, and capacity-building should not be neglected.	<p>The Bureau and MEP fully agree that IPBES assessments are part of a process and are not an end in their own right and are a necessary but not sufficient input to the science-policy interface. In fact, assessments have not been viewed as the end product, as evidenced by the span of outreach activities following the completion of the assessments. There is very strong evidence of uptake of IPBES assessment in policy design especially under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).</p> <p>The Bureau and MEP have consistently recognized the need for a cross-disciplinary, cross-specialist and co-production involving multiple knowledge systems, but this requires Governments and other stakeholders to nominate an appropriate slate of experts.</p> <p>Enhanced uptake of the actionable policy options identified in the assessments could be facilitated by Governments setting up national IPBES committees and platforms which are comprised of a wide range of members from Governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and scientific communities. This would facilitate the development of cross-sectoral policies and polycentric governance processes.</p>
(17): The assessment process should be modernized, including the possible use of web-based systems. IPBES should establish a time-limited task force to evaluate how such modernization can be accomplished.	The Bureau and MEP agree that some aspects of the assessment process could be “modernized”, although the basic approach used by IPBES appears state-of-the-art compared with the successful approaches used by Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). What could and should be piloted are web-based tools, such as ScienceBrief.
(19): The knowledge and data functions need to be strengthened.	The Bureau and MEP agree that this function needs to be strengthened, especially in catalyzing new research to fill critical knowledge gaps, as has been started for land degradation and restoration.
(20): The capacity-building function should continue and be enhanced to support the long-term impact of IPBES.	The Bureau and MEP fully endorse the need to continue, enhance and expand capacity-building to all IPBES functions. It is vital for building up the cadre of experts, partners, policy makers and practitioners needed to sustain the effectiveness and legitimacy of IPBES science-policy interface operations.
(21 and 22): ILK and other knowledge systems should be integral into all of IPBES activities, and the scope and composition of the ILK task force should be reviewed.	The Bureau and MEP have always recognized the importance of indigenous and local knowledge (ILK), and IPBES assessments have done more to integrate ILK into all of its activities than any other comparable body. However, it is clear that more can be done, especially with local knowledge. The draft work programme presents a revised scope and composition for the ILK task force for Plenary consideration.
<b>Budget and financial arrangements</b>	
(23, 24, 26, 27 and 30): IPBES members as well as its partners and other committed stakeholders	Bureau and MEP recognize the importance of financial stability and viability, of an appropriate reserve, and of matching the work programme with available resources. The current fund-raising strategy recognizes the importance of increasing members’ contributions and the

<b>Budget and financial arrangements</b>	
<p>have to do more to help ensure its financial sustainability in the long-term. This situation calls for much more focused efforts by all concerned to secure contributions from members (regularize income streams, potentially using a formula driven system); better mobilize and recognize in-kind contributions; match the work programme with available resources; set a target for reserves; develop key financial indicators; further develop partnerships, including from alliances, sectors and fields of work traditionally not engaged in IPBES; explore other possible modalities of work, and launch specific projects for earmarked fundraising.</p>	<p>diversification of funding streams, and the head of development (secondment from the French Government) has recently made important strides in developing a strategy for private sector funding, with some initial success. The panel's suggestion of a formula driven system for contributions has been considered and rejected several times at sessions of the Plenary. Developing financial indicators to report on budget matters to Plenary can easily be developed and routinely reported.</p>
<p>(28): IPBES should determine an aspirational target to define the percentage of the annual budget devoted to the work programme versus running the platform, and pre-determine an allocation to the different components of the work programme.</p>	<p>In principle Bureau and MEP agree with determining an aspirational target for the work programme activities compared to the running costs, but do not agree with the pre-allocation among the components of the work programme. The suggested percentage of 60% for the work programme is not viable but aiming for a 50% figure would be reasonable.</p>
<p>(29): The scientific community requires greater recognition, and their contributions should be tracked.</p>	<p>The scientific community participates in international assessments, such as IPBES or IPCC for a myriad of reasons. Intellectual contributions to assessments are clearly identified in the assessment citations, and in addition, the co-chairs, CLAs and lead authors (LAs) are encouraged to develop journal publications, which provide further recognition. The estimated total of in-kind contributions of experts is already included in all financial reports to the Plenary.</p>
<b>Towards greater impact</b>	
<p>(31, 32 and 33): IPBES needs improved communications, using more coverage on television, more opinion pieces, and greater diversity in spokespersons, primarily using the experts not Bureau, MEP and secretariat, with a primary target of bringing evidence</p>	<p>The Bureau and MEP agree that increased levels of communications to influence policy uptake are certainly feasible but would require additional human and financial resources. An increase in opinion pieces is certainly feasible and warranted.</p> <p>The Bureau and MEP challenge the panel's conclusion that IPBES does not use experts as spokespersons for outreach and communication. The assessment co-chairs and CLAs participate in press conferences immediately following approval of the assessments and at many</p>

<b>Towards greater impact</b>	
to decision-making to facilitate transformative change. There needs to be a more systematic and strategic approach to impact policy.	subsequent outreach events, e.g., at meetings under the Convention on Biological Diversity (including of SBSTTA and COP).  A more systematic strategy to impact policy at the national and sub-national level could be greatly facilitated by the NFPs and, where they exist, IPBES national committees, the four UN partners, the MEAs, and the private sector. It will also be critical to engage the private sector, starting initially with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and the World Economic Forum. Such a coordinated strategy will require additional financial and human resources
(34): The platform should attempt to reach universal membership	The Bureau and MEP agree. Bureau members, who represent the five regions, will continue to work with the secretariat and the 4 UN partners to make a compelling case to those Governments who are not yet members, noting that about 30 new Governments have joined over the course of the first work programme.
(35): IPBES should put in place regular internal and external reviews	The Bureau and MEP agree that both internal self-evaluations and external evaluations can play a critical role in the continuous improvement of IPBES structures, processes and products. The frequency of these assessments is a decision for Plenary.
(36): IPBES should make explicit use of the “theory of change”	The Bureau and MEP agree that elaborating on the “theory of change” and elucidating preconditions, key assumptions and the logic of change is a promising way for improving consistency and the effectiveness of the work of IPBES.

### **III. Detailed set of responses by the MEP and the Bureau to the review panel’s findings and recommendations**

#### **1. Origins, conceptualization and positioning of IPBES**

*Recommendation (1 and 2): IPBES needs a clearly defined, agreed and clearly articulated vision, mission and adaptive strategy, where the four functions of IPBES are seen and managed as an integrated set.*

The overall objective of IPBES, as stated in UNEP/IPBES/MI/2/9 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 with the following functions”. The panel argues that IPBES puts more emphasis on science and underplays the need for IPBES to actively manage the policy side of its mandate (finding 6) and suggests that IPBES has a linear approach to the science-policy interface (finding 4). While the Bureau and MEP agree that it is useful to revisit and reflect on vision and mission statements, however, in so doing, it is important to recognize that IPBES interprets the word “science” to fully embrace, but to not be limited to, the natural sciences, the social sciences, the humanities, ILK, and technology. This is in accordance with the above-mentioned overall objective which emphasizes human well-being and sustainable development as the ultimate goal. MEP and Bureau would also question whether it is fully correct to state that IPBES takes a linear approach to the science-policy interface. IPBES processes are designed to ensure a continuous interplay between the Governments and experts – both in the co-production of assessments and other products. Unlike publications in scientific journals, assessments are produced through an iterative and interactive non-linear social process encompassing dialogues at different levels, review by Governments and opportunities provided to stakeholders to vet the final knowledge products. However, it has become clear that the level of engagement of IPBES NFPs in IPBES activities should be enhanced. The next work programme up to 2030 proposes to address this issue, including by convening annual meetings with the NFPs outside of the formal Plenary sessions (building on the dialogue meetings between the NFPs and the regional and global assessment co-chairs, and members of the Bureau and MEP which took place in 2017 and 2018).



The panel also argues that IPBES needs to develop a strategy, with a unified mission and vision (finding 4), independent of the work programme. The Bureau and MEP believe that the draft work programme sets out a strategic direction and programmatic framework for IPBES over the next decade. However, if Plenary agrees, these directions could be further strengthened through the articulation of a vision, mission, strategic goals and an adaptive programmatic strategy for the four functions. Such an articulation could be formulated as a separate document, but it could perhaps also be a component of the new work programme.

The Bureau and MEP agree that the four functions of IPBES could and should be managed as an integrated set, together with communications and outreach activities, and all support the science-policy interface. This was also identified in the internal review and is the intent of the work programme up to 2030. When assessments are scoped, the document should identify the capacity-building, policy support tools and knowledge generation activities associated with it, and how they support the science-policy interface. The work programme up to 2030 is intended to be implemented in a manner whereby the four functions mutually support each other in a synergistic manner, building on what was initiated during the first work programme. For example, the capacity-building programme will be integrated in the assessment process through activities including fellowships, webinars, e-learning, writing workshops and science-policy dialogues, thereby enhancing the capacity of Government policy makers to review and use the assessment findings (through support to national platforms and up-take events). The policy support function will support the assessment process through its evolving guidance on assessing the efficacy of policy relevant tools thereby ensuring that the assessment's policy relevant findings are incorporated into the catalogue of methods and tools to support policy making. The knowledge and data function will support the assessments by ensuring that the data, information and knowledge used in the work of IPBES, and in assessments in particular, are available and that the key uncertainties and gaps identified in the assessments are used to stimulate new research. The approach to recognizing and working with ILK will continue to be fully integrated into the assessment processes, building on early achievements. As the functions evolve further, mutual support between and integration among them is anticipated to increase. This is already seen in the work on scenarios and models and the work on valuation.

*Recommendation (3 and 4): IPBES should develop a clearer, more strategic and strengthened approach to stakeholders and partnerships, allowing for differentiation of status.*

Bureau and MEP would like to acknowledge that significant progress has been made in developing different types of partnerships. These have played a major role in the achievement of an extensive codification and documentation of science-policy interface processes of the Platform (including for the involvement of partners and use of IPBES products). This achievement is documented in procedures, frameworks, guides, plans, catalogues and approaches presented to and often considered by the Plenary (see <https://www.ipbes.net/library>). The products are in themselves a testimony to an extensive partnership approach where members of the Bureau, MEP, task forces, expert groups and partner institutions have provided significant leadership and contributions in-kind. The products, and the contributions to them, have however received less visibility and recognition than the assessments and their contributors from academia. This is perhaps why this critical important achievement of IPBES seems to have, at least partly, gone under the radar of the review panel.

IPBES has much to gain by further developing its partnership approach, and the next work programme (2020-30) pays considerable attention to this matter. The review panel noted that all stakeholders and partners are currently viewed as observers with no acknowledgement of the different levels of support they provide (finding 7). There is a need to differentiate between observers and partners. There are now four categories of partners, which clearly articulate the type of support they provide: (i) the four UN partners, FAO, UNEP, UNDP and UNESCO, with whom the IPBES Plenary has established a collaborative partnership arrangement; (ii) the multilateral environmental agreements (CBD, CMS, CITES, Ramsar, UNCCD<sup>2</sup>) with memoranda of cooperation agreed between the secretariats of these conventions and the IPBES

<sup>2</sup> The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (UNCCD).

secretariat; (iii) a limited set of strategic partners (e.g., IUCN, Future Earth, GBIF, IAI)<sup>3</sup> and institutions providing a technical support unit, with whom IPBES has established a memorandum of understanding; and (iv) a larger set of “collaborative supporters”, not requiring any formal agreement. This last category was agreed by the Bureau, in consultation with the MEP, at a joint session of their 12<sup>th</sup> meetings (October 2018), and started to be implemented thereafter. All partners will be recognized on the IPBES web site according to their contribution. The modalities for implementing the draft work programme up to 2030 propose to have, as appropriate, representatives of strategic partners or of collaborative supporters as members of some of the task forces to be established or extended, to fully benefit from their input. This will require appropriate nominations from Governments and stakeholders. In addition, partners and supporters may, as per the IPBES rules of procedure, nominate experts to take part in assessments.

There are possibilities to further strengthen the collaboration with the four UN partners (response to finding 8), to more fully harness the large number of relevant activities of these partners, and with some of the multilateral environmental agreements.

## 2. Governance, structure and procedures

*Recommendation (5): The exact legal status of IPBES should be clarified and communicated (response to finding 11).*

The legal status was well-defined during the negotiations of IPBES, namely IPBES is an independent intergovernmental body. The Plenary of IPBES is the decision-making body of IPBES. IPBES is not a United Nations body and not under the United Nations Environment Programme. The United Nations Environment Programme provides secretariat services to IPBES. In this capacity, i.e. for the acts performed as the secretariat of IPBES, the United Nations Environment Programme assumes liability. The secretariat is solely accountable to the IPBES Plenary on policy and programmatic matters. To clarify the issue, Bureau and MEP recommend that the legal status is prominently displayed on the IPBES web-site and on the inside cover of all IPBES products, including assessment reports.

*Recommendation (6 and 10): Modalities and procedures should be re-examined in order to achieve an appropriate segregation of duties and ensure scientific independence, with a more streamlined governance architecture. For example, Bureau and MEP should not be involved in the preparation of the SPM to ensure it is not politicized.*

The external review concluded that the roles and functions of the Bureau and MEP overlap resulting in a cumbersome situation leading to duplication of effort, limited value-added, unnecessary costs and a potential lack of scientific independence, suggesting that the roles be redefined, and the two bodies combined into one smaller body (finding 16, 17). First, it should be stated that Bureau and MEP fully endorse the principle of scientific independence, which is essential for the credibility and legitimacy of IPBES. Second, it should be recalled that when the Governments negotiated the structure of IPBES, the IPCC approach of a single geographically balanced Bureau that addressed both administrative and scientific/technical issues was considered but not retained, and that it was decided to establish two bodies, Bureau (administrative functions) and MEP (scientific/technical functions).

Bureau and MEP have organized their meetings in a way to avoid overlaps, by holding them in parallel, including both separate and joint sessions. In the opinion of Bureau and MEP, the collaborative working relationship is a very positive feature of the IPBES governance structure and does not undermine scientific independence. If the Plenary were to decide to reopen the issue of structure, and consider a single body, as is the case for IPCC, it would require Governments to nominate active leading scientists and experts in the science-policy interface to serve on this body. Plenary would then have to consider the explicit functions of such a body and revise the rules of procedure together with other procedures, policies and processes of the Platform. One significant difference between IPBES and IPCC is that the chairs of the IPBES assessments are not members of the Bureau, nor of the MEP. Assessment co-chairs take part in the overall intersessional management of the science-policy interface through the assessment

<sup>3</sup> International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF), Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research (IAI).

management committees, which are comprised of the assessment co-chairs and TSU, the Executive Secretary, and a sub-set of Bureau and MEP members. While it could be argued that the IPBES structures ensure even more scientific independence than the ones of the IPCC, the Bureau and MEP are also cognizant of the fact that scientific independence and for that matter credibility, relevance and legitimacy all hinge on the effective management of the science-policy interface processes. Plenary may also want to revisit the issue of providing travel support to all Bureau and MEP members to ensure full attendance of all members as MEP members from developed countries have not always received the support expected from their respective Governments thus preventing their participation in MEP meetings and other meetings requiring their attendance (response to finding 35).

The review panel recommends that the Bureau and MEP should not be involved in developing the SPM unless requested by the co-chairs because their involvement might give the perception that it politicizes the process (based on finding 17). The Bureau and MEP disagree that this politicizes the SPMs and assert that intellectual input from members of MEP and Bureau and their dialogue with co-chairs and CLAs is a key component in the endeavor of advancing the science-policy interface and that this contributes to the policy relevance and balance and usefulness of the key messages and main findings of the SPMs. The recommendation by the review panel is inconsistent with the procedures for the preparation of Platform deliverables, which state that “the responsibility for preparing first drafts and revised drafts of the SPM lies within the report co-chairs, and an appropriate representation of CLAs, and LAs, overseen by the MEP and the Bureau” (decision IPBES-3/3, annex I, section 3.8).

*Recommendation (7, 8 and 9): IPBES should supplement the principle of policy-relevant, but not policy prescriptive with principles of co-design, co-production and co-implementation to strengthen the policy dimensions of IPBES and strengthen the capacity to work at the Science Policy interface. There is a need to diversify different kinds of expertise (in particular the policy dimensions of IPBES) and improve the quality of experts. This could be facilitated by establishing national IPBES committees.*

The Bureau and MEP agree with these recommendations (based on findings 12, 13, and 14) but would note that IPBES procedures already embody considerable co-design, co-production and co-implementation, e.g., by receiving requests for the work programme, by the interplay between MEP, Bureau, Plenary and numerous partners, and the various review procedures of IPBES products. However, we note that calls to nominate policy experts and practitioners for assessments, in particular at the scoping stage, have not always been heard by Governments and stakeholders. The secretariat will continue to place an emphasis on this in preparing invitations to nominate experts. However, Governments and stakeholders may find it challenging to identify a broader range of experts for IPBES activities (e.g., policy experts and practitioners). MEP and Bureau have always recognized the importance of engaging the full range of expertise throughout the assessment process, i.e., from scoping to effective outreach. MEP and Bureau will continue to pay attention to the selection of such experts and will continue to use the Plenary-approved gap-filling procedures to identify such experts when needed. The suggestion of national IPBES committees or platforms is one that has been long been promoted by Bureau, MEP and secretariat, including the field of capacity-building, but more efforts are needed in this regard (see response to recommendation 14 below).

*Recommendation (11): The current rules of procedure need to be checked for relevance, potentially updated, and made more accessible.*

Implementing some of the review panel’s recommendations may require that some of the rules of procedure be modified. The panel also asserted that it was difficult to find all of the rules of procedure in one place. The policies and procedures are located under “policies and procedures” on the IPBES web site (<https://www.ipbes.net/document-library-categories/policies-and-procedures>) but the secretariat can certainly do more to ensure that access on the web-site is user-friendly (response to finding 15).

*Recommendation (12 and 13): The secretariat should be better resourced, administrative procedures streamlined, and the role of TSUs given greater recognition.*

The Bureau and MEP can confirm that the secretariat does an incredible job given how under-resourced it is. This is accomplished by staff working extremely long hours, which over time is unsustainable. Therefore, a key issue for Plenary is to match secretariat funding with expectations from the secretariat (response to finding 18). The need for appropriate recognition for the TSUs and other partners and in-kind contributing officials and experts is important for the long-term sustainability of a highly collaborative entity like IPBES. TSUs play a significant role in coordinating the work of their respective task forces and expert groups, including the coordination of assessments. It is the view of MEP and Bureau that TSUs are quite visible at the relevant scale where they operate, but perhaps less visible at the global level as an integral part of the secretariat. A good example of prominent visibility can be seen when TSUs organize and run assessment expert meetings in their regions and in host countries of the TSU. Staff in the TSUs designated to work on assessments, are often getting greater recognition than other staff given the fact that they are acknowledged on assessment publications, which can be put in their curriculum vitae. IPBES may want to consider ways of recognizing staff and in-kind contributions from experts and partners to other deliverables in the same manner. Many of the recommended options for improving the recognition of TSUs are in effect, but further efforts may be needed (response to finding 18).

*Recommendation (14): IPBES should develop comprehensive guidance on NFP roles and good practice, recognizing that each country should define their own modalities.*

Bureau and MEP recognize that NFPs have an incredibly important role in ensuring the success of IPBES, and if deemed useful a guidance document could be developed (there is already some a document and webinars for NFPs to assist with their role in the assessment review process). NFPs play a critical role in many aspects of IPBES, from nominating experts to reviewing and approving the assessment SPMs, approving the work programme and budget, rules of procedure etc. Given the range of functions demanded of NFPs, their work could be greatly assisted by multi-stakeholder national IPBES committees or platforms that they would chair (as suggested in recommendation 7-9 above). Such committees would not only be helpful in identifying appropriate experts for IPBES activities but would also be of immense help in promoting the uptake and implementation of IPBES findings beyond environment departments. Such an endeavor would however be costly and challenging to put in place in a significant number of countries, and appropriate resources, outside of the IPBES work programme, would need to be identified. It would also require significant human resources within the secretariat to coordinate.

It should be noted, however, that NFPs are employees of their respective Governments with many other responsibilities. NFPs often represent their Governments in several MEAs and are changed routinely by their respective Governments. Therefore, it is difficult for IPBES to influence how they operate even though IPBES can express clearly its expectations of NFPs.

### **3. Implementation of the first work programme**

*Recommendation (15): Align the ambitions and scope of the work programme with the budget and human resources.*

Bureau and MEP fully agree with this recommendation – see our earlier comment on the need for matching funding for the secretariat with expectations. However, as noted in the budget document to be debated in Plenary, a viable work programme requires an annual trust fund budget of \$8.7million (average for 2019-23), given the fact that the annual running costs (annual plenary, two MEP and Bureau meetings and secretariat), together with the 8% overhead fee come to about \$4.5 million. If the annual financial contributions from Governments and the EU continue at their present rate of about \$5.5 million, then no work programme is viable. Therefore, if Governments want a viable science-policy interface for biodiversity, then there is a need for increased size, predictability and diversification of contributions (including by seeking funding from the private sector and foundations). IPBES will also need to continue to rely on significant in-kind contributions and on the generosity of scientists, IPBES officials and partners to provide their time at no cost to IPBES.

*Recommendation (16, 18): IPBES should take a more holistic approach to assessments, and must strengthen significantly the policy dimensions of its work, with policy relevance at national and local levels framing all aspects of IPBES assessments, which should (i) include practitioners, e.g., managers of biodiversity assets in its activities; (ii) develop the capacity to understand how the policy process works; (iii) assess the effectiveness of policies; (iv) generate policy choices within the assessments, that are more closely policy prescriptive; and (v) develop simple and compelling arguments for actionable evidence, tools and options to a range of public and private decision-makers.*

The Bureau and MEP agree that the policy dimensions of IPBES can and should be strengthened in a number of ways (response to findings 22 and 23). The IPBES assessment scoping and preparation processes should involve a wider range of experts from different disciplines (policy experts and practitioners) who understand and have experience with the policy process (design, implementation and monitoring), thus allowing for co-design and co-production, giving greater emphasis to the policy options sections. But this will require Governments and other stakeholders to nominate such experts. To date such expertise has largely been identified through the gap filling process. It is also worth noting that IPBES in addition to its work on the policy support tools catalogue has initiated work on methodological guides and assessments of valuation and on scenario and models, both of which are highly policy relevant. Furthermore, the policy support function has been strengthened in the proposed new work programme of IPBES and if adopted will help ensure that IPBES is able to build a stronger focus on policy.

The review panel recommends that the SPMs be more prescriptive and recommends actionable policy options, at all spatial scales (local to global). This is, however, inconsistent with the operating principles of the Platform (UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/9), which states that the Platform should “provide policy-relevant information, but not policy-prescriptive advice, mindful of the respective mandates of the multilateral environmental agreements” and with the procedures for the preparation of Platform deliverables, which state that “the SPM provides a policy-relevant but not policy-prescriptive summary of that report”. The decision whether to have policy recommendations in the SPM or not lies with the Plenary. Assuming that the Plenary may not want the assessments to be policy prescriptive, the experts could be requested to make the policy options for action clearer and more relevant at a range of spatial scales. However, providing actionable policy options implementable at the local scale, given the wide range of socio-political-economic-environmental conditions, will need tailored assessment uptake events at regional, sub-regional and select national level based on the availability of funding. IPBES, based on previous decisions, has committed to work at global and regional/sub-regional scales and to encourage national Governments to conduct national level assessments which the next work programme should pursue in a more concrete basis subject to the availability of resources.

Bureau and MEP fully agree that the assessments need to evaluate the effectiveness of policies, develop simple and compelling arguments for actionable evidence, tools and options for a range of public and private decision-makers. This should be facilitated given the fact that the proposed work programme up to 2030 of IPBES places IPBES activities within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the post 2020 biodiversity framework and the 2050 vision for biodiversity. The proposed work programme up to 2030 has prioritized three topics that should emphasize policy options, including an evaluation of their effectiveness, and provide compelling arguments for conserving and sustainably using biodiversity and ecosystems: (i) promoting biodiversity to achieve the 2030 agenda for sustainable development; (ii) understanding the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and the determinants of transformative change to achieve the 2050 vision for biodiversity; and (iii) measuring business impact and dependence on biodiversity and nature’s contributions to people. Each of these topics will require the involvement of the full range of stakeholders and expertise and be addressed across the four functions of IPBES.

A key avenue for addressing the need for more actionable and national level knowledge is proposed in deliverable 2 (c) of the draft work programme up to 2030: *Strengthened national and regional capacities for enhancing the science policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services*. The deliverable implements the IPBES capacity-building rolling plan and will, for example, include partnerships for encouraging the development of science policy-platforms, networks, and assessments on biodiversity and ecosystem services at national and (sub-)

regional level. Efforts would include facilitating the development of guidance for such initiatives.

*Recommendation (16): IPBES assessments should be managed as a process rather than an end-product, with greater emphasis on cross-disciplinary, cross-specialist, cross-sector co-production across multiple knowledge systems. Other relevant IPBES deliverables and processes such as policy support tools and methodologies, and capacity-building should not be neglected.*

The Bureau and MEP fully agree that IPBES assessments are part of a process and not an end in their own right (response to finding 22) and are a necessary but not sufficient input to the science-policy interface. In fact, assessments have never been viewed as the end product, as evidenced by the span of outreach activities following the completion of the assessments. As noted in the response to recommendation 2, the assessments should strengthen the policy dimensions of their work. The assessments provide the knowledge base (including scenarios and policy options) for informed decision-making by Governments, the private sector and other stakeholders. Thus capacity-building, knowledge generation, communications and policy support activities have been viewed by MEP and Bureau as integral components of the assessment process starting at the scoping phase. In the future IPBES may want to consider convening scoping processes at a higher level than assessments (see also response to recommendations 1 and 2). For instance, IPBES could scope the implementation of a strategic objective related to the Sustainable Development Goals, whereby activities in all functions are scoped and sequenced over a given time frame. This may help strengthen the uptake of approved assessments, which requires effective involvement of the full range of stakeholders, especially the NFPs, and for which only limited resources have been allocated so far.

There is very strong evidence of uptake of IPBES assessment in policy design especially by the CBD. The review does not adequately acknowledge the significant uptake of IPBES assessments in the CBD SBSTTA recommendations and CBD COP decisions, which are helping to shape the post 2020 framework for biodiversity. This was possible with the support of the assessment experts investing resources and effort to contribute science outcomes to the CBD process leading to COP 14 late 2018. Another example is the contribution and active participation of the co-chairs of the Regional Assessments in the ongoing CBD Regional Consultation Workshop on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

The Bureau and MEP have consistently recognized the need for a cross-disciplinary, cross-specialist and co-production involving multiple knowledge systems, but this requires Governments and other stakeholders to nominate an appropriate slate of experts. Collaboration with policy institutes and other institutions that conduct relevant social science research will assist in raising awareness about the cross-cutting nature of the work of IPBES, which is likely to increase mobilization of appropriate and diverse expertise.

Enhanced uptake of the actionable policy options identified in the assessments could be facilitated by Governments setting up national IPBES committees and platforms which are comprised of a wide range of members from Governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and scientific communities. This would facilitate the development of cross-sectoral policies and polycentric governance processes which, according to the assessment findings, are needed to realize the transformation processes discussed in the regional, land degradation and restoration and global assessments. IPBES capacity-building, policy activities and a focused communication strategy, in collaboration with a wide range of partners could support national efforts to utilize IPBES assessment findings.

*Recommendation (17): The assessment process should be modernized, including the possible use of web-based systems. IPBES should establish a time-limited task force to evaluate how such modernization can be accomplished.*

The Bureau and MEP agree that some aspects of the assessment process could be “modernized”, although the basic approach used by IPBES appears state-of-the-art, e.g., compared with the successful approaches used by IPCC. The key elements that should be maintained include the transparent scoping, nomination/selection, Government and expert peer-review processes, and final Government approval of the SPM. What could and should be piloted are web-based tools,

such as ScienceBrief (response to finding 24) on which an information document was provided to the 6<sup>th</sup> session of the IPBES Plenary (IPBES/6/INF/31).

Bureau and MEP, in concert with the secretariat, could, if requested by Plenary, convene a small task force to evaluate whether the IPBES assessment process can be modernized, bearing in mind the key IPBES principles of transparency, credibility and legitimacy, and the agreed author selection and peer-review processes.

*Recommendation (19): The knowledge and data functions need to be strengthened.*

The Bureau and MEP agree that this function needs to be strengthened, especially in catalyzing new research to fill critical knowledge gaps (finding 25), as has been started for land degradation and restoration. The draft work programme up to 2030 accordingly proposes changes to the scope and composition of the knowledge and data task force.

*Recommendation (20): The capacity-building function should continue and be enhanced to support the long-term impact of IPBES.*

The Bureau and MEP would question the summary conclusion by the review panel where it is stated that progress in capacity-building has been slow (finding 27 and 28). While the assessment function could largely be based on extensive available experience elsewhere, IPBES has had to put significantly more efforts into developing the three other functions. For capacity-building, it has involved assessing and agreeing on priority needs, undertaking a pilot programme, testing match-making and modalities for the capacity-building forum and finally developing a strategic framework in the form of the capacity-building rolling plan as a basis for more specific programmes and partnerships. The fact that three functions have been under development also partly explains why capacity-building has focused on supporting assessments and only more recently has turned its attention to scenarios, valuation and ILK. That said, the Bureau and MEP fully endorse the need to continue, enhance and expand capacity-building to all IPBES functions. It is vital for building up the cadre of experts, partners, policy makers and practitioners needed to sustain the effectiveness and legitimacy of IPBES science-policy interface operations. The key to success is to put into practice partnerships as set out in the capacity-building rolling plan. This is especially important in order to advance work related to addressing agreed national and regional priority needs.

*Recommendation (21 and 22): ILK and other knowledge systems should be integral into all of IPBES activities, and the scope and composition of the ILK task force should be reviewed.*

The Bureau and MEP (and the internal review) have always recognized the importance of ILK and IPBES assessments have done more to integrate ILK into all of their activities than any other comparable body. However, it is clear that more can be done (findings 30, 31 and 32), especially with local knowledge, recognizing that a large spectrum of practice-based knowledge might be included within local knowledge.

Accordingly, the draft work programme presents a revised scope and composition for the ILK task force for Plenary consideration.

The review argues that the participatory mechanism needs to be strengthened and implemented. The Plenary agreed that the participatory mechanism would comprise four activities: (i) providing a web-based platform to facilitate the effective and meaningful engagement of existing networks of indigenous peoples and local communities and relevant experts and allowing new, especially self-organizing, networks to develop and join; (ii) promoting, through consultations, a dialogue with various networks, relevant experts and policymakers to mobilize inputs and disseminate results during all four phases of the assessment process, including both web-based consultations and face-to-face dialogue workshops; (iii) creating opportunities for shared learning and exchange across stakeholders and knowledge systems and through dedicated discussion forums on the web-based platform or in the context of the contribution to and use of tailored catalogue of policy support tools and methodologies; and (iv) supporting IPBES, by means of strategic partnerships, in promoting and catalysing activities by appropriate partners that build the capacity of indigenous peoples and local communities to engage effectively and meaningfully in IPBES and that mobilize indigenous and local knowledge in formats accessible to IPBES when such knowledge is missing. Various initiatives that are in line with the four

types of activities and the task force's proposed priorities are already taking place within the work of IPBES, particularly within the global assessment. The ILK task force sees a need for further refinement, elaboration and coordination, as well as for an analysis of gaps in relation to the participatory mechanism's objectives and the priorities it identified.

#### 4. Budget and financial arrangements

*Recommendation (23,24,26, 27 and 30): IPBES members as well as its partners and other committed stakeholders have to do more to help ensure its financial sustainability in the long-term. This situation calls for much more focused efforts by all concerned to secure contributions from members (regularize income streams, potentially using a formula driven system); better mobilize and recognize in-kind contributions; match the work programme with available resources; set a target for reserves; develop key financial indicators; further develop partnerships, including from alliances, sectors and fields of work traditionally not engaged in IPBES; explore other possible modalities of work<sup>4</sup>, and launch specific projects for earmarked fundraising.*

Bureau and MEP recognize the importance of financial stability and viability, of an appropriate reserve, and of matching the work programme with available resources (findings 33-39). Regarding the reserve, financial procedures (rule 20) require "to maintain a working capital reserve of 10 per cent of the average annual budget of the biennium", which is what was done during the first work programme. Increasing this percentage would require a change in the financial procedures for IPBES (decisions IPBES-2/7 and IPBES-3/2). The current fund-raising strategy recognizes the importance of increasing members' contributions and the diversification of funding streams, and the head of development has recently made important strides in developing a strategy for private sector funding, with some initial success. The panel's suggestion of a formula driven system for contributions has been debated and rejected several times at sessions of the Plenary. Developing financial indicators for Plenary can easily be developed and routinely reported to Plenary.

*Recommendation (28): IPBES should determine an aspirational target to define the percentage of the annual budget devoted to the work programme versus running the platform, and pre-determine an allocation to the different components of the work programme.*

In principle Bureau and MEP agree with determining an aspirational target for the work programme activities compared to the running costs (see our earlier response to *recommendation 15 - align the ambitions and scope of the work programme with the budget and human resources*), but do not agree with the pre-allocation among the components of the work programme. A viable IPBES annual trust fund budget requires in average \$8.7 million, given the fact that the annual running costs are about \$4.5 million, which would mean that the work programme would be about 40-47% of the total trust fund budget, well below the panel's suggested percentage of 60%. The suggested percentage of 60% for the work programme is not viable but aiming for a 50% figure would be reasonable. Plenary approval of the work programme on an annual basis explicitly determines the relative funding for its different components. Pre-determining the allocation among the work programme components would reduce flexibility to allocate each year with evolving priorities.

*Recommendation (29): The scientific community requires greater recognition, and their contributions should be tracked.*

The scientific community normally participates in international assessments, such as IPBES or IPCC for a myriad of reasons including: (i) opportunity to work in a multi-disciplinary environment with experts from around the world leading very often to new scientific collaborations; (ii) contribute to an assessment process that could lead to evidence-based informed policies at the national and global level; (iii) opportunity to publish the outcome of the assessments, and thus advance one's career; and (iv) opportunity to have one's research inform the assessment findings. Intellectual contributions to assessments are clearly identified in the assessment citations, and in addition, the co-chairs, CLAs and LAs are encouraged to develop journal publications, which provide further recognition. Scientists involved in expert groups

<sup>4</sup> For example, web-based tools for reviewing the literature, machine learning approaches, and a useful monitoring and evaluation as well as knowledge management strategy and system.



and task forces are clearly identified on the web-site. In addition, the estimated total of in-kind contributions of experts is already included in all financial reports.

## 5. Towards greater impact

*Recommendation (31, 32 and 33): IPBES needs improved communications, using more coverage on television, more opinion pieces, and greater diversity in spokespersons, primarily using the experts not Bureau, MEP and secretariat, with a primary target of bringing evidence to decision-making to facilitate transformative change. There needs to be a more systematic and strategic approach to impact policy.*

The Bureau and MEP agree that increased levels of communications to inform policy uptake are certainly feasible (response to finding 41) but would require additional human and financial resources. An increase in opinion pieces is certainly feasible and warranted.

The Bureau and MEP challenge the panel's conclusion that IPBES does not use experts as spokespersons for outreach and communication. The review panel argues that IPBES primarily relies on Bureau, MEP and secretariat rather than on the assessment co-chairs and CLAs. However, this is not the case. The assessment co-chairs and CLAs participate in press conferences immediately following approval of the assessments and at many subsequent outreach events. For example, it was the co-chairs and CLAs, not Bureau or MEP members that presented the findings of the pollination, scenarios, land degradation and restoration, and the four regional assessments at the Plenary press conferences, at CBD SBSTTA and COP meetings, and at many other uptake events. However, Bureau and MEP members note that they are themselves experts, which is why they were selected for their respective roles, and that they therefore are also appropriate spokespersons, especially in their own region where they can communicate in their local language.

Past and current spokespersons for assessments were and are being trained by media specialists, and include co-chairs, selected CLAs and LAs of all regions, that are recognized experts for each assessment. In addition, IPBES spokespersons, typically the Chair and/or the Executive Secretary, have also received specific requests from media, especially about cross-assessment and wider global issues.

A more systematic strategy to impact policy at the national and sub-national level could be greatly facilitated by the NFPs and, where they exist, IPBES national committees, the four UN partners, the MEAs, and the private sector.

NFPs can play a critical role in organizing meetings of the assessment experts (many are already doing this), MEP and Bureau members with Government officials and other key stakeholders to discuss actionable options at the national and possibly local level. This is an area where IPBES national committees of multiple stakeholders would be particularly helpful.

The four UN partners, MEAs and private sector can all play a critical role in influencing multi-sectoral policy uptake (response to finding 44), with, for example, FAO reaching out to agricultural ministries, UNDP to development ministries, UNEP to environment ministries, and UNESCO to science and technology ministries. The biodiversity-related MEAs can play a vital role in promoting actionable policies, and it will also be critical to engage the private sector, starting initially with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and the World Economic Forum.

Such a coordinated strategy will require additional financial and human resources.

*Recommendation (34): The platform should attempt to reach universal membership*

The Bureau and MEP agree. Bureau members, who represent the five regions, will continue to work with the secretariat and the 4 UN partners to make a compelling case to those Governments who are not yet members, noting that about 30 new Governments have joined over the course of the first work programme.

*Recommendation (35): IPBES should put in place regular internal and external reviews*

The Bureau and MEP agree that both internal self-evaluations and external evaluations can play a critical role in continuous improvement of IPBES structures, processes and products. The frequency of these assessments is a decision for Plenary. The work programme up to 2030 includes objective 6 dedicated to reviewing the effectiveness of IPBES.

*Recommendation (36): IPBES should make explicit use of the “theory of change”*

The Bureau and MEP agree that elaborating on the “theory of change” and elucidating preconditions, key assumptions and the logic of change is a promising way for improving consistency and the effectiveness of the work of IPBES.

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