



# CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

Distribution: General

UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.47  
20 September 2011

Original: English

TENTH MEETING OF THE  
CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES  
Bergen, 20-25 November 2011  
Agenda Item 12

## THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PLATFORM ON BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES (IPBES) – BACKGROUND NOTE FOR DRAFT RESOLUTION 10.8

*(Prepared by the Secretariat)*

### **The need for a new Platform**

1. Although there are numerous initiatives and organizations addressing issues of science and policy in relation to biodiversity and ecosystem services, it has been perceived that there is no consistent global mechanism which synthesizes and analyzes information for relevant policymaking fora in a way which is recognized by both the scientific and policy communities for this purpose. There is also seen to be a gap in relation to building the necessary capacity to foster the enhanced development of this science-policy interface.
2. The analogy has been drawn with the field of global climate change, where the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has performed functions of this kind, and it has been noted that no equivalent body serves the field of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem management.

### **Origins of the proposal to establish IPBES**

3. Following the final meeting of the multi-stakeholder international steering committee for the consultative process on an International Mechanism of Scientific Expertise on Biodiversity (IMoSEB) in November 2007, the Executive Director of UNEP was invited to collaborate with governments and other partners in convening an intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting to consider the establishment of an intergovernmental mechanism for biodiversity and ecosystem services.
4. At the same time an initiative had been underway to follow up on the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA), and stakeholders in that initiative agreed that it should be merged with the process for following up on IMoSEB. These two strands together developed into the proposal to establish IPBES.
5. With encouragement from the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP Decision IX.15, May 2008), two ad hoc intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meetings were held in Putrajaya, Malaysia, in November 2008 and Nairobi, Kenya, in October 2009 to

identify the gaps and needs for strengthening the science-policy interface in relation to biodiversity and ecosystem services. At a third meeting in June 2010, in Busan, Republic of Korea, governments decided that an IPBES should be established, and they outlined their views on the focus of its work programme and its operating principles in a text referred to as the “Busan Outcome”.

### **The purpose and operating framework defined in the Busan Outcome**

6. The Busan Outcome defined the purpose of IPBES as “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”. It emphasized that the focus should be on responding to the needs of Governments, including requests defined and conveyed to the Platform through the governing bodies of relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements. There is a clear understanding that the aim is to provide policy-relevant information but not policy-prescriptive advice, bearing in mind the mandates of the respective MEAs.

7. Four principal interdependent functions of the Platform were defined:

- (i) to identify and prioritize key scientific information needed for policymakers, and to catalyze efforts to generate new knowledge;
- (ii) to undertake regular and timely assessments (global, regional, sub-regional and thematic);
- (iii) to support policy formulation and implementation by identifying and promoting the development of tools and methods; and
- (iv) to prioritize key capacity building needs for improving the science-policy interface, and to catalyse financing for capacity-building activities.

The Platform is expected to engage in dialogue with key scientific organizations, policymakers and funding organizations, but not directly to undertake new research itself.

8. Various operational principles were also spelled out. Key among them is the principle that assessments must be scientifically independent and must ensure credibility, relevance and legitimacy through peer review, identification of the uncertainties that apply, and transparency of decision-making processes. IPBES is expected to collaborate with existing initiatives on biodiversity and ecosystem services, including MEAs, United Nations bodies and networks of scientists and knowledge holders, to fill gaps and build upon their work, while avoiding duplication.

9. The aim is to establish and operate the Platform as an independent intergovernmental body administered by one or more existing United Nations organizations, agencies, funds or programmes. Its plenary decision-making body will be open to participation by all Member States of the United Nations and by regional economic integration organizations, with intergovernmental organizations and other relevant stakeholders (such as international and regional scientific organizations, environment trust funds, non-governmental organizations and the private sector) participating as observers.

### **Endorsements and plans for the first plenary meetings**

10. The Busan Outcome was welcomed by the 10<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya in October 2010 (Decision X/11), and by the

Executive Board of UNESCO in that same month (Decision 185 EX/43). It was then considered at the 65<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly in December 2010, which adopted a Resolution (65/162) requesting UNEP to convene a plenary meeting “to determine modalities and institutional arrangements for the platform at the earliest opportunity”.

11. The UNEP Governing Council, in decision 26/4 at its 26<sup>th</sup> session in February 2011, endorsed the Busan Outcome, responded positively to the UNGA Resolution and asked the UNEP Executive Director to convene the plenary meeting in 2011 in cooperation with UNESCO, FAO and UNDP, and to continue to facilitate any ensuing process to implement the Platform until such time as a secretariat is established.

12. UNEP has subsequently proposed that two plenary sessions of IPBES be organized to determine the operational processes and institutional arrangements for the Platform. The first session is scheduled to take place in Nairobi, Kenya, on 3-7 October 2011. At this session it is expected that government representatives will consider the draft principles and procedures governing the work of IPBES, its governance structure, processes for nomination and selection of host institution(s) and host country for the Platform, and initial elements of the work programme.

13. The second session is planned for early 2012, at which it should be possible to determine these modalities and institutional arrangements and to consider a detailed draft work programme for IPBES.

### **Opportunities and priorities for CMS engagement**

14. IPBES offers an opportunity to CMS to join in a global collective effort to find ways to translate scientific knowledge more effectively into relevant policymaking processes. Shaping technical findings better into key messages for decision makers, targeting key audiences in their own “language”, and reaching sectors beyond the biodiversity conservation sphere are currently areas of weakness for all the biodiversity-related MEAs, and on which all need new sources of assistance. In addition, the envisaged programme of policy-relevant assessments (global, regional, sub-regional and thematic) offers a mechanism for generating vital information to support CMS objectives concerning the benefits (ecosystem services) which people derive from migratory species and their sustainable use.

15. CMS was represented at the second and third ad hoc intergovernmental meetings mentioned above, by the Chair of the Scientific Council and by the Secretariat respectively. The Standing Committee briefly considered the matter at its 37<sup>th</sup> Meeting in November 2010.

16. Given that the first IPBES plenary takes place shortly before CMS COP10 and that its focus is primarily administrative and institutional, it has been decided that significant CMS engagement in the first plenary can not be a priority. The Convention will nonetheless be ably represented at the plenary meeting by one of the Vice Chairs of the Scientific Council.

17. In addition, a particularly important axis of CMS engagement in the IPBES process is through existing mechanisms for collaboration among the biodiversity-related MEAs. A key instance of this is the collaboration among the Conventions’ scientific bodies, focused through regular meetings of the Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies (CSAB). Shared perspectives on IPBES have been discussed in CSAB meetings, and it is intended that coordinated and joint inputs will be made through CSAB to the upcoming IPBES plenary meetings (in addition of course to individual inputs by each MEA as required).

18. Possibilities could include an agreed common procedure for putting MEA requests to IPBES, and for receiving information from the Platform. There maybe a case for establishing guidance on the most appropriate format in which MEAs would wish to have results presented to them, for example, by means of thematic syntheses specific to each MEA (following the model used for the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment).

19. At its 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting in Switzerland in February 2011, CSAB also discussed options for a formal role in the governance arrangements to be established for IPBES, most relevantly perhaps via representation in the proposed Scientific Advisory Panel. Strong governance and practices will be needed to ensure that the Platform meets the needs of policy-makers, enables engagement and is scientifically credible.

20. The second plenary will provide a more substantive opportunity for inputs to the development of the work programme for IPBES. UNEP is actively canvassing for views on priority requirements from among the MEAs, so as soon as possible in advance of the second plenary it will be important for views to crystallize in CMS on how the Platform might best help to serve the Convention's priority needs in relation to the interface between science and policy on the conservation and sustainable use of migratory species. There might also be perspectives for the Convention to offer on the most appropriate focus of assessments (global, regional, thematic, focused on issues of common interest across MEAs, etc), on major knowledge gaps, and on capacity building. No less important will be advice on avoiding duplication with existing activities.

21. Engagement at the level of Contracting Parties will also be important. At present there is limited information available in the context of national stakeholders on what IPBES will do, what its expected outcomes are and who is likely to benefit. Plain and simple communication efforts will be required from the outset on these issues, since UN terminology otherwise can prove an obstacle to good understanding and involvement of those who are not already working in this arena. For the science community, funding for participation is a key limitation, and new ways of enabling this may need to be developed.

### **Further information**

22. Further information on IPBES, including reports and meeting documents, can be found at the website: [www.ipbes.net](http://www.ipbes.net).

### **Action requested:**

- a. To discuss how the Scientific Council and CMS in general can contribute to IPBES; and
- b. To endorse the IPBES resolution contained in UNEP/CMS/Resolution 10.8.