

## **IPBES-7 Highlights: Friday, 3 May 2019**

On Friday, IPBES-7 delegates continued negotiations in two working groups to finalize the summary for policy makers (SPM) of the Global Assessment on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and the Platform's future work programme.

Highlights in the working group on the Global Assessment included:

- Discussions on references to internationally recognized rights of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs);
- Prolonged discussions on references to necessary changes in consumption and whether these should specifically address "affluent" societies; and
- Extensive debate regarding the transformation of food systems and different types of sustainable land-management approaches.

Highlights in the working group on future work included:

- Agreement, after lengthy debate, on launching two assessment scoping processes on the nexus between biodiversity, water, food, and health, and on transformative change; and
- Discussion on inviting the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to engage in developing a joint technical report on biodiversity and climate change, preferably to be completed on time to inform discussions on the post-2020 biodiversity framework.

### ***Working Group on the Global Assessment***

Regarding internationally agreed goals like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity, delegates agreed that future targets are expected to be more effective if they consider impacts of climate change, including on biodiversity, and actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Participants reached agreement on a reference that large bioenergy crop or afforested areas are expected to compete with areas set aside for conservation, including restoration, or agriculture. They also stressed the benefits of avoiding and reducing deforestation for biodiversity and local communities.

A lengthy discussion took place regarding recognizing non-human rights, including animal rights and rights of nature. Opinions differed, with some supporting reference to internationally recognized rights, like the ones of IPLCs, without inclusion of non-human rights that are under active international negotiation. Others stressed the evolution of the rights approach, opining that non-human rights should be explicitly mentioned.

Further disagreements surfaced regarding references on reducing consumption and waste, particularly among "the affluent," as well as regarding the notion of social justice. Some delegates suggested referring to "changes" in consumption and waste rather than "reduction" and to social equity instead of social justice.

A lengthy discussion took place regarding the circular economy, with delegates exchanging opinions on whether the concept of resource efficiency includes the idea of the circular economy. The working group eventually decided to refer to circular and other economic models. Delegates further held differing opinions on whether to refer to "true" or "hidden" costs of production and consumption.

Regarding the need to transform food systems, the group debated at length whether options for sustainable agricultural production are "emerging" or "existing and increasingly practiced" and a reference to sustainable intensification. Some argued that intensification is unsustainable; others suggested referencing "sustainable intensification, based on agricultural practices and new technologies, such as precision agriculture."

Regarding options for sustainable agriculture, participants negotiated references to organic agriculture and agroecological practices, nutrient management, silvopastoral systems, conservation agriculture, and soil and water conservation practices. A lengthy discussion took place on: the need for "harmonization" of existing global mechanisms of genetic material conservation and transfers; and whether to include reference to access, and fair and equitable sharing of benefits.

Participants further agreed to references noting that: regulatory mechanisms could address the risks of co-option and lobbying, where commercial or sectoral interests may work to maintain high levels of demand, and continued use of pesticides and chemical use; and non-regulatory alternatives include appropriate economic incentive programmes, for example some payments for ecosystem services programmes.

On "ensuring sustained food provision in the oceans," delegates agreed to reference "the sustainable ecosystem approach" to fisheries management. They further emphasized that conservation as well as "sustainable use" are important for biodiversity and that conservation finance should focus on both market and non-market based economic instruments.

Delegates debated references to environmental externalities and decided to refer to "environmental impacts, such as externalities of economic activities" throughout. On structural changes for internalizing environmental impacts, delegates debated whether to refer to "paying to mitigate," "redressing," or "preventing, mitigating, and redressing" impacts. They ultimately agreed on "addressing" impacts. Discussions also clarified that there is evidence that trade agreements and derivatives markets could be reformed to promote equity and prevent deterioration of nature, but that there is debate about how this could be implemented.

After informal consultations on a table summarizing possible actions and pathways to achieve transformative change, delegates noted broad consensus to retain the table and focused on adding information on the relevant actors, supporting evidence, and key messages to the different "actions" listed. One delegation noted

that not all possible actions and pathways are aligned with key messages, suggesting finalizing all key messages before further addressing the table. Discussions were postponed to allow further informal consultations.

During the evening, the working group finalized consideration of outstanding items regarding the key messages. Delegates agreed on stating that “nature and its vital contributions to people, which together embody biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are deteriorating worldwide.”

The working group agreed that in the past 50 years, human population has doubled, the global economy has grown four-fold and global trade has grown 10-fold, using revised numbers accounting for inflation. Participants agreed on a reference that the SDGs are integrated and indivisible, and implemented nationally. They further reached consensus on trends regarding forests, stressing that 32 million hectares of primary or recovering forest were lost between 2010 and 2015, but also noting that the rate of forest loss has slowed globally, and that temperate and boreal forest areas are increasing.

The working group reached agreement on noting that the positive contributions of IPLCs to sustainability can be facilitated through national recognitions of land tenure, access, and resource rights in accordance with national legislation, with one delegation lamenting the low level of ambition that does not allow “real advances on the recognition of the rights of IPLCs.” A lengthy debate took place on whether large-scale deployment of intensive bioenergy plantations, replacing natural forests and subsistence farmlands “can,” “may,” or “will sometimes” threaten food and water security, as well as, local livelihoods, including by intensifying social conflicts. Delegates agreed that it “can” threaten food and water security.

### **Working Group on Future Work**

Co-Chair Hernandez opened the session on Friday morning, summarizing that, on Thursday evening, the working group had finalized discussions on the objective “assessing knowledge,” including approval of two scoping processes: one on the nexus between biodiversity, water, food, and health; and one on transformative change. One delegation disagreed, proposing to either delay ongoing assessments or the scoping for new ones, and with others raised concerns over budgetary, human resource, time constraints, and the desire to retain the flexibility of IPBES. Others stressed the urgency to seize the current political momentum on biodiversity and argued that postponing IPBES-8 would free up time, financial, and human resources for substantive work on the scoping for the assessments. This group supported maintaining the parallel assessment process, or, at the very least, conducting a basic methodological assessment on transformative change. Additional interventions highlighted potential synergies from holding parallel scoping processes, notably to avoid duplication.

After informal consultations, delegates agreed to request the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP), the Bureau, and the Secretariat to facilitate discussions between two scoping processes with a view to maximize the synergies between the assessments and avoid duplication of scope.

Regarding the timeline for initiating the scoping for the business assessment, delegates strongly disagreed over whether it should be considered by IPBES-8 or IPBES-9. Some emphasized that it would send a “bad signal” to wait until 2023 to give guidance to business, while also asking the sector to “act now” and make commitments to the post-2020 biodiversity framework.

One delegate noted discussions in the budget group on making additional funding available to support the Secretariat, others said “this is not just a budget question,” with one delegation pointing to human resource constraints both in terms of contributing experts and IPBES Plenary, and other delegations stressing the need for balance between the Platform’s functions. No agreement was

found, and the relevant passage was left bracketed. Accordingly, brackets were also kept around the timeline of the initial assessments for the period up to 2030.

Delegates agreed to request IPBES-9 to reconsider initiating a second global assessment, including an assessment of ecological connectivity. Lengthy debate then emerged on how to request the preparation of a technical report on biodiversity and climate change. Many highlighted the report should be published in time to inform the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP) of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the development of the post-2020 biodiversity framework. After informal consultations delegates eventually agreed to request the Executive Secretary of IPBES to explore the issue with the Executive Secretary of the IPCC.

On regularly updating the guide on the production of assessments, delegates highlighted the need: to build on the contributing experts’ experience by promoting exchanges between outgoing and incoming contributors; to request the MEP and Bureau to review the conceptual framework; and for ongoing and adaptive management of the work programme and reconsideration of adjustments to the timeline and list of assessments.

Delegates agreed to request the various task forces to develop specific deliverables on each topic set out in the work programme for consideration by IPBES-8. They prioritized that the work programme should be predictable to allow research, and other programming entities and strategic partners to effectively support identified deliverables. Emphasizing the rolling nature of the work programme, they also decided to launch additional calls for requests, and that such inputs should be submitted no later than six months prior to a session of the Plenary.

Returning to the priority topics, delegates agreed that deliverables under the topic of “promoting biodiversity to achieve the 2030 Agenda” will look at the two nexus issues, one on biodiversity and water, food and health and one on biodiversity and climate change, and that other aspects may include the role of connectivity in ensuring integrity and resilience in socio-ecological systems. They also changed the title of the documents to refer to “the rolling work programme up to 2030.”

Delegates agreed to forward the document to Plenary.

### **In the Corridors**

As time began to run out, delegates were still stuck in debates on issues that, according to one exhausted participant, “have not much to do with biodiversity, but are just political,” such as references to “gender mainstreaming” or “internationally recognized rights of indigenous peoples.” As the day went by, delegates discussing the summary for policy makers increasingly invoked “orders from capitals” leaving participants wondering how many Friends of the Chair groups it would take to sort out the remaining issues overnight and whether the Chair will still “consider us his Friends” as one participant joked.

Discussions in the working group on the future work programme were more constructive, although a delegate regretted that much time was lost in “the IPCC hiccup,” emphasizing that “after all, if we want the IPCC to collaborate with IPBES, we can just tell the IPCC do so when we see each other again in Kyoto next week.” Leaving the working group, a participant concluded that “it is now up to the ominous budget group to sort out the last entanglements on the timelines for the new assessments.”

As night fell over Paris, white smoke emerged from the budget group while delegates in the working group on the Global Assessment were still trying to put out the fires that flared up in many parts of the SPM background section.

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of IPBES-7 will be available on Monday, 6 May 2019 at <http://enb.iisd.org/ipbes/7-plenary/>