

Functions, operating principles and institutional arrangements of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

Adopted by the second session of the plenary meeting to determine the modalities and institutional arrangements for IPBES, held from 16 – 21 April 2012 in Panama City, Panama

I. Functions of the Platform

1. The Platform's objective 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:

(a) Focusing on Government needs and based on priorities established by the Plenary, the Platform responds to requests from Governments, including those conveyed to it by multilateral environmental agreements related to biodiversity and ecosystem services as determined by their respective governing bodies. The Plenary welcomes inputs and suggestions from, and the participation of, United Nations bodies related to biodiversity and ecosystem services as determined by their respective governing bodies. The Plenary also encourages and takes into account, as appropriate, inputs and suggestions made by relevant stakeholders, such as other intergovernmental organizations, international and regional scientific organizations, environment trust funds, non-governmental organizations, indigenous peoples and local communities and the private sector. To facilitate this, and to ensure that the work programme of the Platform is focused and efficient, a process to receive and prioritize requests, inputs and suggestions will be established by the Plenary;

(b) The Platform identifies and prioritizes key scientific information needed for policymakers at appropriate scales and catalyses efforts to generate new knowledge by engaging in dialogue with key scientific organizations, policymakers and funding organizations, but should not directly undertake new research;

(c) The Platform performs regular and timely assessments of knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystem services and their interlinkages, which should include comprehensive global, regional and, as necessary, subregional assessments and thematic issues at appropriate scales and new topics identified by science and as decided upon by the Plenary. These assessments must be scientifically credible, independent and peer-reviewed, and must identify uncertainties. There should be a clear and transparent process for sharing and incorporating relevant data. The Platform maintains a catalogue of relevant assessments, identifies the need for regional and subregional assessments and helps to catalyse support for subregional and national assessments, as appropriate;

(d) The Platform supports policy formulation and implementation by identifying policy-relevant tools and methodologies, such as those arising from assessments, to enable decision makers to gain access to those tools and methodologies and, where necessary, to promote and catalyse their further development;

(e) The Platform prioritizes key capacity-building needs to improve the science-policy interface at appropriate levels and then provides and calls for financial and other support for the highest-priority needs related directly to its activities, as decided by the Plenary, and catalyses financing for such capacity-building activities by providing a forum with conventional and potential sources of funding.

II. Operating principles of the Platform

2. In carrying out its work the Platform will be guided by the following operating principles:

(a) Collaborate with existing initiatives on biodiversity and ecosystem services, including multilateral environment agreements, United Nations bodies and networks of scientists and knowledge holders, to fill gaps and build upon their work while avoiding duplication;

- (b) Be scientifically independent and ensure credibility, relevance and legitimacy through peer review of its work and transparency in its decision-making processes;
 - (c) Use clear, transparent and scientifically credible processes for the exchange, sharing and use of data, information and technologies from all relevant sources, including non-peer-reviewed literature, as appropriate;
 - (d) Recognize and respect the contribution of indigenous and local knowledge to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems;
 - (e) Provide policy-relevant information, but not policy-prescriptive advice, mindful of the respective mandates of the multilateral environmental agreements;
 - (f) Integrate capacity-building into all relevant aspects of its work according to priorities decided by the Plenary;
 - (g) Recognize the unique biodiversity and scientific knowledge thereof within and among regions and the need for the full and effective participation of developing countries and balanced regional representation and participation in its structure and work;
 - (h) Take an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach that incorporates all relevant disciplines, including social and natural sciences;
 - (i) Recognize the need for gender equity in all relevant aspects of its work;
 - (j) Address terrestrial, marine and inland water biodiversity and ecosystem services and their interactions;
 - (k) Ensure the full use of national, subregional and regional assessments and knowledge, as appropriate, including by ensuring a bottom-up approach.
3. The Platform's efficiency and effectiveness will be independently reviewed and evaluated on a periodic basis as decided by the Plenary, with adjustments to be made as necessary.

III. Institutional arrangements for the Platform

A. Plenary

4. The Plenary is the Platform's decision-making body.

1. Membership

5. The Platform is open to States Members of the United Nations, who may become members by expressing their intent to do so.

2. Participation of States not members of the Platform, United Nations bodies and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations

6. Any State not a member of the Platform, any United Nations body and any other body, organization or agency, whether national or international, governmental, intergovernmental or non-governmental, [including any organization of][accredited representative of] indigenous peoples and local communities, which is qualified in matters covered by the Platform, and which has informed the secretariat of the Platform of its wish to be represented at sessions of the Plenary, may participate in the Platform as an observer, subject to the Platform's rules of procedures.

3. Functions

7. The functions of the Plenary include:

- (a) Acting as the Platform's decision-making body;
- (b) Responding to requests from Governments, including those conveyed to it by multilateral environmental agreements related to biodiversity and ecosystem services as determined by their respective governing bodies;
- (c) Welcoming inputs and suggestions from, and the participation of, United Nations bodies related to biodiversity and ecosystem services as determined by their respective governing bodies;
- (d) Encouraging and taking into account, as appropriate, inputs and suggestions made by relevant stakeholders, such as other intergovernmental organizations, international and regional

scientific organizations, environmental trust funds, non-governmental organizations, indigenous peoples and local communities and the private sector;

(e) Ensuring the active and efficient participation of civil society in the Plenary;

(f) Selecting one Chair and four Vice-Chairs, taking due account of the principle of geographical balance among the five United Nations regions, based on criteria, a nomination process and length of service to be decided by the Plenary;

(g) Selecting members of any subsidiary body, taking due account of the principle of geographical balance among the five United Nations regions, based on criteria, a nomination process and length of service to be decided by the Plenary;

(h) Approving a budget and overseeing the allocation of the trust fund;

(i) Deciding on an evaluation process for independently reviewing the Platform's efficiency and effectiveness on a periodic basis;

(j) Adopting a programme of work for the Platform, including on knowledge generation, assessments, policy support and capacity-building;

(k) Establishing subsidiary bodies and working groups as appropriate;

(l) Setting up a transparent peer review process for the production of reports by the Platform;

(m) Deciding on a process for defining the scope of reports and for the adoption or approval of any reports produced by the Platform (following agreement on the work programme);

(n) Adopting and amending rules of procedures and financial rules.

4. Officers of the Plenary

(a) Composition

8. With regard to the officers of the Plenary, one Chair and four Vice-Chairs will be selected by Governments that are members of the Plenary, taking due account of geographical balance among the five United Nations regions. Guidelines covering the nomination process, length of service and any rotation of the Chair of the Plenary among the regions are provided for in the rules of procedure of the Plenary.

(b) Functions

9. As set out in the rules of procedure and as decided and directed by the Plenary, the functions of the Chair include the following:

(a) Presiding over meetings of the Plenary;

(b) Chairing the Bureau of the Plenary;

(c) Representing the Platform as its Chair.

10. As set out in the rules of procedure and as decided and directed by the Plenary, the functions to be carried out by the Vice-Chairs include the following:

(a) Serving as rapporteur of the Plenary;

(b) Participating in the work of the Bureau;

(c) Acting as the representative of the Platform as Vice-Chair as necessary.

(c) Guidelines for the nomination and selection of the Chair and Vice-Chairs

11. The following guidelines will be taken into account in the processes for nominating and selecting the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Plenary:

(a) Ability to carry out the agreed functions of the Chair and Vice-Chairs;

(b) Scientific expertise in biodiversity and ecosystem services with regard to both natural and social sciences among the officers of the Plenary;

(c) Scientific, technical or policy expertise and knowledge of the main elements of the Platform's programme of work;

(d) Experience in communicating, promoting and incorporating science into policy development processes;

(e) Ability both to lead and work in international scientific and policy processes.

12. The guidelines for the selection of officers by the Plenary might need to be viewed in the light of the programme of work adopted by the Plenary and agreement on the work programme. The extent to which the skills of the Chair and the Vice-Chairs complement one another might also need to be taken into consideration in the nomination and selection processes.

B. Administrative and scientific functions to facilitate the work of the Platform

13. One or more subsidiary bodies will be established by, and report to, the Plenary to support the smooth, effective and timely operation of the Platform. The subsidiary body or bodies will, as decided by the Plenary, provide administrative and scientific oversight and facilitate the operations of the Platform.

14. Such administrative functions include:

(a) Addressing requests related to the Platform's programme of work and products that require attention by the Platform between sessions of the Plenary;

(b) Overseeing communication and outreach activities;

(c) Reviewing progress in the implementation of decisions of the Plenary, if so directed by the Plenary;

(d) Monitoring the secretariat's performance;

(e) Organizing and helping to conduct the sessions of the Plenary;

(f) Reviewing the observance of the Platform's rules and procedures;

(g) Reviewing the management of resources and observance of financial rules and reporting thereon to the Plenary;

(h) Advising the Plenary on coordination between the Platform and other relevant institutions;

(i) Identifying donors and developing partnership arrangements for the implementation of the Platform's activities.

15. Such scientific and technical functions include:

(a) Providing advice to the Plenary on scientific and technical aspects of the Platform's programme of work;

(b) Providing advice and assistance on technical and/or scientific communication matters;

(c) Managing the Platform's peer-review process to ensure the highest levels of scientific quality, independence and credibility for all products delivered by the Platform at all stages of the process;

(d) Engaging the scientific community and other knowledge holders with the work programme, taking into account the need for different disciplines and types of knowledge, gender balance, and effective contribution and participation by experts from developing countries;

(e) Assuring scientific and technical coordination among structures set up under the Platform and facilitating coordination between the Platform and other related processes to build upon existing efforts;

(f) [Exploring approaches to facilitating the sharing and transfer of technology in the context of assessment, knowledge generation and capacity-building according to the work programme of the Platform;]

(g) Exploring ways and means to bring different knowledge systems, including indigenous knowledge systems, into the science-policy interface.

C. Subsidiary bodies of the Plenary

16. The following subsidiary bodies of the Plenary will be established:

(a) A Bureau comprising the Chair and four Vice-Chairs and five additional officers that will oversee the administrative functions listed above;

(b) A Multidisciplinary Expert Panel that will carry out the scientific and technical functions listed above. An interim arrangement for the membership of the Panel will be put in place until the final regional structure and expert composition of the Panel is determined by the Plenary. The interim membership will be based on equal representation of five participants from each of the five United Nations regions, and the arrangement will be in place for not more than a two-year period in order to allow the final regional structure and expert composition to be agreed at a session of the Plenary. [The Chair and four Vice-Chairs will also be members of the Panel.] The chairs of the scientific subsidiary bodies of the multilateral environmental agreements related to biodiversity and ecosystem services and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change will be observers.

[D. Working groups

17. In addition to the above subsidiary bodies, and depending on the decisions related to their establishment, the Plenary might establish working groups or other structures to implement the Platform's work programme. The functions to be performed by such groups or structures could include:

(a) Identifying and prioritizing key scientific information needed for policymakers and catalysing efforts to generate new knowledge (without undertaking new research);

(b) Performing regular and timely assessments of knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystem services [and functions] and their interlinkages, which might include comprehensive global, regional and, as necessary, subregional assessments, thematic issues at appropriate scales and new topics identified by science;

(c) Identifying policy-relevant tools and methodologies, such as those arising from assessments, enabling decision makers to gain access to those tools and methodologies and, where necessary, promoting and catalysing their further development;

(d) Prioritizing capacity-building needs to improve the science-policy interface at appropriate levels and then providing and calling for financial and other support for the highest-priority needs related directly to its activities, as decided by the Plenary, and catalysing financing for such capacity-building activities by providing a forum with conventional and potential sources of funding.

18. While recognizing that any agreement to establish working groups would take place only after more detailed discussion of the work programme, preliminary options for the establishment of working groups or other structures to deliver the Platform's work programme might include:

(a) *Option 1:* Two working groups are established, one to undertake assessments, generate knowledge and support policy, and the other to oversee the capacity-building work on the Platform in relation to knowledge generation, assessment and policy support. Both working groups are established with geographic, disciplinary and gender balance;

(b) *Option 2:* Two working groups are established, one to undertake assessments and the other to oversee the work on knowledge generation, policy support and capacity-building. Both working groups are established with geographic, disciplinary and gender balance;

(c) *Option 3:* Regional structures are established (whether working groups or centres), to oversee the full programme of work (knowledge generation, assessment, policy support and capacity-building) at the regional level. Regional working groups would comprise regional experts with gender, disciplinary and within-region geographic balance. In addition, ad hoc and time-bound working groups might be formed to undertake global and/or thematic assessments. Such global and/or thematic groups would be formed with geographic, disciplinary and gender balance.]

E. Secretariat

19. The secretariat will have the following indicative administrative functions, acting under the direction of the Plenary:

- (a) Organizing meetings and providing administrative support for meetings, including the preparation of documents and reports to the Plenary and its subsidiary bodies as needed;
- (b) Assisting the members of the Plenary, the Bureau and the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel to undertake their respective functions as decided by the Plenary, including facilitating communication between the various stakeholders of the Platform;
- (c) Facilitating communication among any working groups that might be established by the Plenary;
- (d) Disseminating public information and assisting in outreach activities and in the production of relevant communication materials;
- (e) Preparing the Platform's draft budget for submission to the Plenary, managing the trust fund and preparing any necessary financial reports;
- (f) Assisting in the mobilization of financial resources;
- (g) Assisting in the facilitation of monitoring and evaluation of the Platform's work.

20. Furthermore, the secretariat may be tasked by the Plenary with undertaking technical support functions, such as providing relevant assistance to ensure that the Platform implements its work programme. Such potential functions need to be developed following discussion of the work programme and would be implemented under the direction of the Plenary.

21. There will be a single central secretariat dealing with administrative functions only. In such an arrangement, one or more United Nations organizations and specialized agencies (such as the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Development Programme) may consider seconding fully dedicated staff to the Platform. At its inception, the secretariat will operate from a single location while exploring networking with regional and thematic technical structures.

F. Financial and other contributions to the Platform

22. A core trust fund to be allocated by the Plenary will be established to receive voluntary contributions from Governments, as well as from United Nations bodies, the Global Environment Facility, other intergovernmental organizations and other stakeholders such as the private sector and foundations, on the understanding that such funding will come without conditionalities, will not orient the work of the Platform and cannot be earmarked for specific activities. Its use will be determined by the Plenary in an open and transparent manner. Specific requirements for governing the trust fund will be specified in financial rules and procedures to be adopted by the Plenary.

23. Exceptionally, subject to approval by the Plenary, additional voluntary contributions may be accepted outside the trust fund, such as direct support for specific activities of the Platform's work programme.

24. In kind contributions will come without conditionalities from Governments, the scientific community, other knowledge holders and stakeholders and will be key to the success of the implementation of the work programme.

G. Evaluation of the operation of the Platform

25. The Platform's efficiency and effectiveness will be independently and externally reviewed and evaluated on a periodic basis as decided by the Plenary, with adjustments to be made as necessary.

H. Definitions

26. For the purpose of the Platform:

[(a) “Ecosystem services” means the benefits that people obtain from ecosystems. These include provisioning services such as food, water, timber, and fibre; regulating services, such as the regulation of climate, floods, disease, waste and water quality; cultural services, such as recreation, aesthetic enjoyment and spiritual fulfilment; and supporting services, such as soil formation, photosynthesis and nutrient cycling.

(b) “Ecosystem functions” means a subset of the interactions between ecosystem structure and processes that underpin the capacity of an ecosystem to provide benefits.]