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**Second ad hoc intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting on an
intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity
and ecosystem services**
Nairobi, 5–9 October 2009

**Letter sent by the Governments of Germany and Japan to
Member States**

Note by the secretariat

The annex to the present note contains a joint letter by Mr. Signar Gabriel, Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of Germany, and Mr. Sakihito Ozawa, Minister of the Environment of Japan, on an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services. The secretariat has the honour to reproduce this letter for the information of participants.

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Annex



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Dear Colleagues

Germany and Japan are working closely together in a spirit of mutual trust to prepare the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and to secure the stability and sustainability of our endeavors.

An important issue in this preparatory process is improving the interface between science and policy in the field of biodiversity. We would be pleased to explain to you why we consider this to be a vital aspect of global biodiversity conservation. We would also like to outline why we support the UNEP-steered process for establishing an Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IP-BES), and why we feel the proposed mechanism is suitable for fulfilling these functions.

Up to now, there has been no international scientific body in the field of biological diversity which provides political decision-makers with information on the status and development of biodiversity in order to assist the decision-making process. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) impressively shows the importance of a global interface between science and policy for creating political understanding and pointing out genuine solutions.

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The IPCC does not undertake scientific research itself, but collects and evaluates scientific data and presents it in a comprehensible form. In addition, the IPCC highlights the impacts of climate change on the environment and society and suggests strategies for avoidance and adaptation.

The most important and influential product of the IPCC is the Assessment Report, which is published every six years along with corresponding executive summaries for political decision-makers. These reports play an outstanding role in climate policy. They serve as essential signposts because they are based on sound science and reflect the overwhelming expert consensus on climate change issues. This has led to the once disputed findings of climate research now being widely accepted and having a decisive influence on climate policy. Additionally, the messages conveyed by the IPCC reports have also brought about a change of attitude among the general public.

We expect the establishment of an intergovernmental interface between science and policy on the issue of biodiversity to have a similar effect on both policy and the general public. The IPCC can serve as a successful model in many respects (e.g. regarding individual structural elements, procedures and processes, products and principles).

The mechanism we have in mind must meet the following basic conditions and functions if it is to be a truly effective instrument for global biodiversity conservation.

- Be politically independent and serve all relevant clients, in particular the biodiversity related conventions and their scientific advisory bodies, which will be strengthened and supported by the work of IPBES
- Be responsive to policy needs and provide scientific information and policy options in a policy-relevant but policy neutral way: uptake of assessment findings within decision-making processes is best ensured if findings directly respond to needs/requests from policy making bodies and decision-makers and are not policy prescriptive but offer different options/scenarios
- Ensure the strong governmental involvement so that governments would acknowledge the legitimacy of scientific findings and support the uptake of these findings
- Avoid duplication of efforts and involve, build on and coordinate existing structures, mechanisms, networks, institutions, assessments,





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information services, data holdings and individual scientists that are already providing scientific advice and input

- Ensure the involvement of the best available experts in all regions of the world, as possible geographically and gender balanced, and multidisciplinary knowledge (i.e. natural, social and economic sciences, including traditional and indigenous knowledge) as well as a comprehensive peer review process in order to safeguard scientific credibility and high quality
- Deliver assessment findings in most appropriate formats: comprehensive regular reports, special products for decision makers like the IPCC summary reports for decision makers, where scientific findings are translated into simplified and target group oriented language, special reports e.g. rapid assessments of emerging issues a.s.o.

These are the most important criteria for the IPCC's success and, in our view, absolutely must apply – irrespective of the future mandate, structure or legal status of the IPBES – to the establishment of a platform on biodiversity. We consider the platform's political independence to be especially important for guaranteeing the credibility, authenticity and legitimacy of the results.

We actively support the creation of an IPBES, and are also in favour of this instrument being established in 2010. We therefore strongly think that the upcoming intergovernmental UNEP conference on IPBES in October 2009 in Nairobi should issue a consensus on the establishment of an interface between science and policy in the field of biodiversity, thus enabling us to further strengthen global policy on biodiversity.

Yours sincerely,

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