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Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
Second session**
Antalya, Turkey, 9–14 December 2013

**Report of the African regional consultation meeting on the
Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and
Ecosystem Services**

Note by the secretariat

The annex to the present note sets out the final report of the African regional consultation meeting on the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, convened in Nairobi, from 22 to 24 July 2013, by the United Nations Environment Programme and the African members of the Bureau of the Platform's Plenary and the Platform's Multidisciplinary Expert Panel. The report is presented as received from the meeting organizers and has not been formally edited.

Annex

Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Africa Regional Consultation 22–24 July 2013, Nairobi, Kenya

Final Report

Executive Summary

The objectives of the meeting were to: 1) Strengthen and focus regional inputs to the IPBES Work Programme 2014-2018, with an emphasis on a strong programme of capacity building in the region; 2) Strengthen regional participation in the IPBES intersessional process on other issues; 3) Develop an active network of institutions contributing to IPBES work and related capacity building in Africa; 4) Identify possible partnerships between institutions and/or governments to strengthen sub-regional and regional biodiversity and ecosystem services assessments, as well as knowledge generation, within the IPBES framework.

Following presentations on the Work Programme, Deep Oceans and AfriBes, the following points were made: African countries should submit comments on the Work Programme, the importance to include the marine environment and global fisheries as a priority for Africa, the need to link with the post-2015 development agenda and sustainability and the possibility to have specific programmes and assessments (for example, mining activities).

The meeting identified key environmental priorities for Africa and suggested some process assessments, which could be considered by the IPBES MEP and the Bureau, including the capacity needs assessments to identify the gaps and ensure capacity for Africa, and identify what is required for Africa to improve the science – policy interface.

Following a detailed session on the IPBES draft work programme, the meeting identified areas of capacity building specific to Africa, explored the purpose of the regional hubs and centres of excellence and suggested that communication and outreach are required in specific areas.

The outcome of the policy support session included; 1) the review of current policies relevant to biodiversity and ecosystems at the national and regional level; 2) the support for formulation of appropriate policies, programs and instrument to support IPBES work program; 3) support to policy implementation and; 4) consolidate reports on the adoption of policies and their impacts at regional and national level and evaluate and report outcomes.

Following the presentation on Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, it was agreed that IPBES Secretariat would compile an initial list based on the inputs received from participants and circulate to the African Bureau and MEP for their consideration.

The meeting discussed the Strategic Partnerships, the future MEP selection process and the draft procedures for the preparation of reports, and concluded with the importance to encourage participants to engage their ministers (AMCEN, etc.), mobilize resources and the necessity of consistency of participation of governments and stakeholders from Africa to prepare for IPBES-2.

1. Introduction

The IPBES Regional Consultation Meeting for Africa was jointly organized by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Africa Bureau and Multidisciplinary Experts Panel (MEP) from 22-24 July 2013 in Nairobi, Kenya, and supported by the generous funding of the Government of Norway. Representatives of 21 of the 40 IPBES members in the region, as well as a number of non-governmental organizations and the private sector, attended the meeting. The list of participants is attached as Annex 1.

The objectives of the meeting were as follows:

1. Strengthen and focus regional inputs to the IPBES Work Programme 2014-2018, with an emphasis on a strong programme of capacity building in the region.

2. Strengthen regional participation in the IPBES intersessional process on other issues.
3. Develop an active network of institutions contributing to IPBES work and related capacity building in Africa
4. Identify possible partnerships between institutions and/or governments to strengthen sub-regional and regional biodiversity and ecosystem services assessments, as well as knowledge generation, within the IPBES framework.

All presentations and resource materials made available at the meeting would be available at the following website (<http://ipbes.net/related-events/364-afr-regional-consultations.html>) at least until 31 December 2013.

2. Opening remarks and update on the IPBES process

The meeting was opened by Neville Ash, member of the IPBES Interim Secretariat and Chief of the Biodiversity Unit at UNEP, who described the objectives of the meeting which are to develop a concrete work programme relevant to Africa while noting the importance of the Regional Consultation and their input to the IPBES Intersessional Process. Neville Ash also briefly listed practical points including the preparation to IPBES-2 through discussions and submitting review comments on the documents, and then thanked Norway for the financial support, ICRAF for hosting the meeting and all Stakeholders for participating at the meeting.

Sebebe Demissew, MEP member & Vice-Chair for Africa made a keynote speech on “IPBES for Africa”, which is available on the IPBES website. This was followed by remarks by Alfred Oteng-Yeboah, Bureau member for Africa and Chair of the meeting, which among other things emphasized the importance of a regional common goal and process in order to move forward to the operationalization of IPBES, the purpose of the present meeting to ensure this was well reflected and Norway’s contribution in organizing the meeting.

Nalini Sharma, member of IPBES Interim Secretariat, provided introductory remarks and a presentation, which is available on the IPBES website, on IPBES and its key issues including the IPBES form, functions and operating principles; and the introduction to the intersessional activities and overall schedule towards IPBES-2.

3. IPBES Assessments for Africa

Neville Ash gave a presentation on the Work Programme based on an overview of all the requests, inputs and suggestions put forward to the Platform. The following general comments were made following the presentation:

- The Chair noted that no African country has submitted requests to the Platform and strongly encouraged African countries to submit comments on the work programme;
- The representative of Liberia expressed concern that IPBES will not do national assessments, especially in deliverables in Objective 3.
- The representative of South Africa stated that the Work Programme will require extensive sources of funding and asked: what types of funding sources are available on a long-term and sustainable way?
- The representative of Egypt expressed the importance to include marine environment in Africa as a priority.
- The representative of UNESCO stated that there is no linkage with the post-2015 development agenda, in particular in terms of sustainability. One of the key strategies to be considered is economic transformation.
- The representative of Kenya stressed the importance of considering the different levels of knowledge, asking if there is a possibility to have specific programmes and assessments. The importance of activities such as mining in Africa for resource management activities to improve the quality of biodiversity was also highlighted.

This was followed by presentations under the IPBES Work Programme – Assessments by representatives from the University of Nairobi and AfriBes, addressing the following questions:

- What are the capabilities of countries to support national assessments on biodiversity and ecosystem services?
- How can assessments be developed in a way they can be scaled up at regional and global levels?
- What methodologies and metrics can be used?
- Priorities for thematic assessments?
- Are there other major assessment processes in the region to which the regional IPBES assessments need to be aligned?

The representative of the University of Nairobi made a presentation on the “Threats to Deep Ocean: a forgotten/ignored environment”, [which is available on the IPBES website](#). Among other things, she highlighted the need for African governments to prioritize assessments of status of deep ocean as well as the capacity development in deep ocean, expertise scientists and technology facilitation, and the possible partnerships with oil, gas and mining companies to carry out initial assessments and for continuous monitoring.

The representative from AfriBes/Seb made a presentation on AfriBes: “Towards an African IPBES? Potential of the AfriBes network”, [which is available on the IPBES website](#). The presentation described the functions and origins of AfriBes, as well as the various facilities offered through this network.

The Chair then opened discussion based on the presentation and the Work Programme document and requested to review the IPBES objectives as outlined in the draft IPBES work programme 2014 - 2018. The following points and comments were made:

- The representative of Egypt stressed the importance to include the global fisheries in the Work Programme and noted the importance of networks such as AfriBes as innovative and the way forward for Africa;
- The representative of UNESCO mentioned that by focusing on Objective 2, that trans-boundary issues should be considered, as well as prioritizing research and development (especially curriculum development). It was also noted that for Africa arid zones such as deserts are a priority;
- The representative of South Africa emphasized that the mandate of the marine instruments should be recognized and that educational aspect of IPBES is very important by bringing a new dimension to the expertise available, as well as enhance the capacity to share information within Africa;
- A MEP Member stressed the need to realize the presence of practitioners, as well as consider all types of ecosystems;
- The representative of Uganda noted the constraint of limited technology and scientific knowledge in Africa;
- The representative of Burundi mentioned that there is an interesting relationship between humans, plants and fungi – an ecosystem service that requires further research.

The Chair suggested to review the 5 objectives of IPBES as outlined in the draft IPBES work programme 2014 – 2018 as well as the specific deliverables. The following comments and issues were highlighted:

Objective 1:

- The representative of Egypt stressed that the focus should be on capacity building. He noted that the IPBES draft work programme was ambitious and raised a concern whether the deliverables can be achieved within the given timeframe;
- The representative of Gabon noted the need for knowledge with regards to human resources and the importance of economic aspect of biodiversity;

- The representative of Liberia noted that the assessments were made 8-9 years ago and that the information from experts from that time is not available anymore; stressed the importance of new data. He added that a new approach where Africa can undertake research at the national level is necessary.

Some key environmental priorities identified by Africa:

- Marine biodiversity and ecosystems, including deep seas;
- Deforestation, including the identification of new species;
- Mining (and oil exploration) and its impact on biodiversity and ecosystem services;
- Mountain ecosystems;
- Cropland ecosystems;
- Desert ecosystems;
- Fresh water;
- Wetlands degradation;
- Dry lands;
- Invasive species.

In addition, the meeting suggested some process assessments which could be considered by the IPBES MEP and the Bureau:

- Capacity needs assessments to identify the gaps and ensure capacity for Africa to be able to participate in assessments; and
- Assessment of the science-policy interface in Africa and what underpins Africa's involvement in IPBES (what is required for Africa to improve the science-policy interface).

4. Capacity Building - Tuesday, 25 July 2013

The Chair provided a summary of the previous day meeting and suggested to break into two groups: Group 1 Objectives 1, 2 & 5; and Group 2 Objectives 3, 4 & 5 with the following tasks:

- Link the objectives with the Platform's functions;
- Identify the capacities required (individual, institutional and systemic levels);
- Prioritize deliverables;
- Prioritize concerns at African, regional or sub-regional levels.

Sebsebe Demissew presented the highlights from the previous days' discussions with a focus on capacity building. As a result:

- Looked at the ecosystems and raised the issues related to them
- Discussed the importance of agro-forestry
- Noted that there was not much discussion on ecosystem services
- Thematic assessments
- Education: tertiary level education
- Resources: innovative ways of resource mobilization
- Networking: the need to use existing platforms such as AfriBes

Sebebe Demissew also stressed the need to take into account the aspect of “capacity development”, and the interconnection between the individual, institutional and system/societal levels of capacity.

Results from Group 1:

- Noted the importance of synthesizing the findings from IPBES deliverables and packaging and communicating these for policy makers to use;
- Stated the need to develop a process of transferring the knowledge to policy-makers in a transparent and clear manner;
- There may be need for capacity development on certain thematic issues where adequate knowledge may not be available;
- Identified different areas of capacity development;
- Described the role of hubs/centres of excellence.

Results from Group 2:

- The need to strengthen the capacity of experts in Africa on assessments of degradation of biodiversity, and at all levels to assess ecosystem services;
- Marine and coastal ecosystems should be taken into account;
- Noted the difficulty to access information online and therefore the need to disseminate this information through different media.

Alfred Oteng Yeboah, Chair of the meeting, made a presentation on the draft CMS Strategic Plan which is available for online review and is made available on the IPBES website.

The outcome of this session and for onward transmission to the IPBES MEP and Bureau is as follows:

The following areas of capacity building were identified at the individual, institutional and systematic levels:

Environmental economists; Environmental analysts; Individual researchers; Other knowledge holders (indigenous); Policy makers; Statisticians and environmental/biodiversity modeling and predictions; Environmental observation system & remote sensing at national and regional level; Policy analyst; To avoid institutional duplication we need institutional reforms; Capacity for coordination to all sectors related to environment; and Taxonomy.

The purpose of the regional hubs and centres of excellence are to

- Help to avoid duplication of functions and repetition at regional level, by identifying existing centers of excellence;
- Strengthen the centers and align them to IPBES needs;
- Systemic capacity should be at regional level considering the transboundary nature of ecosystems;
- Strengthen biodiversity focal points in Africa.

For Objective 3, capacity development is needed for:

- Developing products on degradation and restoration of land and freshwater systems and biodiversity and agriculture;
- At the individual level: building capacity of experts to assess the levels of degradation of biodiversity, establishing baselines, data requirements for models, collection of primary data;
- At the individual and institutional: assessments on ecosystem services.

In terms of prioritization of the deliverables 3 (e); 3 (f); 3 (a) add the marine and coastal ecosystems; 3 (b) add non-timber forest products and associated ecosystems; 3 (c); and 3 (d)

For Objective 5, the meeting suggested that communication and outreach is required in the following areas:

- Environmental valuation of goods and services;
- Environmental value to be packaged as livelihood/job creation, thus gain attention of ministers (concerned authorities);
- Information should be packaged for different target audiences (managers on the ground to politicians require different communication approaches);
- Develop capacity at the institutional level for exchange mechanisms and access to all information and the catalogues proposed.

Other areas of communication included with/through:

- AMCEN;
- National Steering Committees (put together views of different ministries together and other others not in government);
- Policy briefs;
- Develop cabinet memo/paper e.g. to ratify a convention.

5. Policy support

Rodger Mpande, MEP member, made a presentation on “Key Issues to Consider on the Policy Function of IPBES Work Programme”. He stressed that decision makers often find it difficult to translate science into policy actions and that policy must be integrated into Africa’s capacity building.

The Chair highlighted policy support as the ability to provide action at the national level on the one hand – a governance issue, the need for technical information to support sound decision making on the other hand. He stated that policy support is not only a top-down approach but also bottom-up one.

The outcome of this session and for onward transmission to the IPBES MEP and Bureau is as follows:

- Review of current policies relevant to biodiversity and ecosystems at the national and regional level (relevancy, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability);
- Support for Formulation of Appropriate policies, programs and instrument to support IPBES work program;
- Support to Policy Implementation;
- Consolidate reports on the adoption of policies and their impacts at regional and national level and evaluate and report outcomes.

Wednesday, 24 July 2013

6. Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, Strategic Partnerships, MEP review

Jean-Bruno Mikissa, MEP member, and Nalini Sharma both presented on the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (presentations available on the IPBES website).

This was followed by a very lively discussion on who are the IPBES stakeholders in Africa, and it was agreed that the IPBES Secretariat would compile an initial list based on the inputs received from participants and circulate to the Africa Bureau and MEP for their further consideration.

Nicholas King from AFRISEB made a presentation on “SPIRAL”, which is a project to enhance the connectivity between biodiversity research and policy making in order to improve the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, available on the website. The Chair then opened a discussion on the identification of regional and subregional Centers of Excellence in Africa. The following points were raised:

- There are challenges to identify Centers of Excellence;
- The importance to identify and assign responsibility to Centers of Excellence;
- The critical involvement of South/South cooperation as well as technology transfer in order to support the implementation of the IPBES activities.

Nalini Sharma presented the Strategic Partnerships & the procedure for the selection of the future MEP documents.

Comments following the presentation mostly focused on the future MEP selection procedure:

- Some participants proposed that the Bureau could be responsible in preparing a list of the disciplines required for MEP members and ask the regions to select among themselves the appropriate experts in the relevant disciplines;
- It was noted that in Africa the selection of the interim MEP members was done at sub-regional level and this practice can continue, on a rotation basis, i.e. select one country with an expert in a specified field which will allow a constant circulation of experts – similar to the UNCCD process;
- Some participants expressed concern that many positions may be vacant and that regions may struggle to pick their candidate. A participant also added that gender balance may not be met;
- The Chair stressed the importance of nominating as many experts from different disciplines to expand the pool of experts for selection.

Nalini Sharma presented the Draft procedures for the preparation of reports document.

The representative of South Africa expressed concern that the UNCCD are discussing the need for a science body for desertification, similar to IPBES. She requested that the Bureau at its next meeting considers enlarging the mandate of IPBES to include desertification issues in order to save time and resources.

7. Closing

Nalini Sharma thanked on behalf of IPBES Secretariat, the Chair, Sebsebe Demissew and MEP members present for providing support to the meeting, Norway for their generous support, all the participants and ICRAF colleagues for the meeting space. Special thanks were mentioned to Michiko Okumura, IPBES Interim Secretariat member for organizing the meeting and Nadia Djinnit for the support. Participants were encouraged to provide to the IPBES Secretariat the name and contact details of their National Focal Points to help facilitate better communication on IPBES. In addition, she reminded the participants that the deadline for submission of comments on the online review documents is 28 July 2013. She also reminded participants that the deadline for registration of new stakeholders is 19 August 2013.

Sebsebe Demissew, on behalf of the MEP members present, thanked all participants for coming and providing inputs and suggestions, UNEP and Norway for their logistical and financial support, the Secretariat, the interpreters and the Chair for the success of the meeting. He stated that the overall objective to have consultations at an African standing was achieved.

Some participants made the following closing remarks:

- The representative of South Africa thanked the representatives for organizing an informative and valuable meeting, and Norway for the financial assistance, and stressed that all representatives take ownership of IPBES and take action in order to send a better message to developed country partners, as well as discuss with politicians of their own country.

- The representative of UNESCO thanked the Secretariat for organizing the meeting and delivered a special message from the Assistant Director of the science sector, conveying UNESCO's support, especially technical support to IPBES, while working with African groups in particular where capacities need to be developed.
- The representative of CropLife International thanked all participants for their efforts and stated that the private sector will remain engaged and will participate in upcoming IPBES meetings, and suggested to mainstream biodiversity through businesses.
- The representative of Kenya stressed the importance of consistency of participation as we move forward to IPBES-2.

The Chair made the following concluding remarks:

- The importance of the consultation as an opportunity to articulate ideas on the Work Programme
- Stressed the importance to record the results of the meeting, as well as to submit comments on the documents
- Mentioned the possibility for the Africa group to meet two days before the opening of the Second Plenary
- Expressed his awareness of the ownership issue and encouraged the participants to engage their ministers to think about their commitment before the AMCEN meeting taking place in November
- The importance of resource mobilization such as innovative fund raising strategies or national environmental funds, education at all levels with the development of curriculum and the training of teacher, technology transfer and, North-South and South-South cooperation.

Lastly, The Chair thanked all the participants for supporting the process, all the members of the Secretariat for organizing a successful meeting, the Government of Kenya for facilitating the entry in Kenya of participants, ICRAF for the facilities, MEP members for their participation, UNEP for providing the logistical support and finally he thanked the interpreters for all their hard work.

Annex 1

List of Participants

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