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**Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy  
Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services****Fifth session**

Bonn, Germany, 7–10 March 2017

Item 6 (g) of the provisional agenda\*

**Work programme of the Platform: policy support tools  
and methodologies****Work on policy support tools and methodologies (deliverable  
4 (c))****Note by the secretariat****Introduction**

1. In its decision IPBES-4/1 on the work programme, the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) took note of the guidance for further work on policy support tools and methodologies (IPBES/4/12, section II); encouraged stronger integration of work regarding policy support tools and methodologies across all relevant deliverables of the work programme; and invited the submission of relevant policy support tools and methodologies by experts, Governments and stakeholders for inclusion in the catalogue of policy support tools and methodologies (IPBES/4/INF/14).
2. In the same decision, the Plenary requested the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, supported by the expert group on policy support tools and methodologies, to continue the development of the online catalogue of policy support tools and methodologies and to make available to Governments and stakeholders a prototype of the online catalogue for testing and review prior to the fifth session of the Plenary; to identify the various needs of users for, and facilitate the development of, policy support tools for all relevant deliverables of the work programme, as appropriate; and to undertake an evaluation of the use and effectiveness of the online catalogue.
3. The Plenary further requested the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel to oversee the content of the online catalogue and, in consultation with the Bureau, to further develop the governance of the catalogue, including by developing criteria and an open and transparent process for the inclusion of policy support tools and methodologies provided by experts, Governments and stakeholders.
4. Finally, the Plenary approved, until its further consideration at its fifth session, the extension of the mandate of the expert group on policy support tools and methodologies to continue its work in developing the online catalogue, which, at the discretion of the Chairs following consultations with the Bureau, could be further supported by a limited number of resource persons and representatives of strategic partners as resources permit.

**I. Catalogue of policy support tools and methodologies**

5. In 2016, IPBES received an offer for an existing web architecture ready to be used to operationalize the IPBES catalogue of policy support tools and methodologies. The Bureau accepted the offer based on a thorough analysis by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, the secretariat and other IPBES experts. This web architecture, called Oppla, has been developed and offered to IPBES by a

\* IPBES/5/1/Rev.1.

partnership between the Operational Potential of Ecosystem Research Applications (OPERAs) and Operationalization of natural capital and ecosystem services (OpenNESS), in the context of projects funded by the European Union and the Oppla European Economic Interest Grouping.

6. Oppla represents an open platform for sharing policy support tools and case studies related to biodiversity and ecosystem services and in many ways meets the needs of the envisaged catalogue of policy support tools and methodologies. The Oppla team committed itself to developing a working prototype of the web architecture for the IPBES catalogue, to providing IPBES with full control over the catalogue and to enabling IPBES to benefit from relevant future upgrades of Oppla at no cost. Further on Oppla and the offer is provided in document IPBES/5/INF/14, annex I.

7. Following acceptance of the offer in October 2016, the secretariat, supported by the newly established technical support unit for deliverable 4 (c) at the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre, and working with the expert group on policy support tools and methodologies, started the following activities related to the online catalogue:

- (a) Work with the Oppla team preparing the prototype of the catalogue;
- (b) Work with those involved in the thematic assessment of pollinators, pollination and food production on the policy support tools identified in the assessment as a basis for populating the prototype catalogue;
- (c) Work with the expert group for scenario analysis and modelling on the development of an evolving online guide on the use of scenarios and models in assessment and decision support, and on the methodological assessment of scenarios and models;
- (d) Work with the expert group on values to develop a web resource on the preliminary guide on multiple values;
- (e) Review of the catalogue of assessments and the development of an approach to its integration within the same web architecture, as far as feasible;
- (f) Development of options for governance of the catalogue, including a proposal on the addition of content to the catalogue and quality control with regard to added material;
- (g) Development of a draft template for the inclusion in the catalogue of information on policy support tools and methodologies referred to in IPBES assessments;
- (h) Development of more detailed plans for the further development, testing and implementation of the catalogue following the fifth session of the Plenary;
- (i) Planning for an evaluation of the use and effectiveness of the online prototype of the catalogue, in the context of the process for the review of IPBES (deliverable 4 (e)).

8. The first prototype of the online catalogue for policy support tools and methodologies will be accessible at <http://oppla-ipbes.pantheonsite.io/>. The prototype will include examples of policy support tools and methods referred to in the thematic assessment of pollinators, pollination and food production, the methodological assessment on scenarios and modelling and the preliminary guidance on values. Selected scenario and modelling tools from the larger Oppla database will also be included to demonstrate the range of available tools. The Plenary is invited to access and test the prototype of the online catalogue and to provide feedback on it to the secretariat, in particular with regard to its user friendliness and desired functionality. It is planned that the online catalogue on policy support tools will be completed by the sixth session of the Plenary, based on feedback received.

9. It is suggested that the following sources and processes for assuring quality, overseen by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, be used to develop content for the catalogue:

- (a) Policy support tools and methodologies analysed within final IPBES assessments. Templates will be developed to capture information from the assessments and guidance provided for their inclusion in the catalogue. Quality will be assured through the review process for the assessment reports;
- (b) Policy support tools and methodologies arising from the work of other IPBES task forces and expert groups. Templates will be developed to capture information to be included in the catalogue. Guidance will be developed for ensuring quality control where not provided as part of the IPBES process;
- (c) Regular formal invitations to experts, Governments and stakeholders to submit policy support tools and methodologies to the IPBES secretariat. Templates will be developed to capture information to be included in the catalogue, as well as guidance for ensuring quality control;

(d) The content of the catalogue could be further enhanced by integrating or linking it to tools and methodologies that are available on the original Oppla website, clearly marked as non-IPBES products. Quality assurance within the Oppla system is based on information provided by the tool developer such as publications, case studies and details of a recognized quality assurance system (e.g., the International Standards Organization).

10. The Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, in consultation with the Bureau, will develop the necessary guidance on submission, quality assurance and management in respect of the content of the online catalogue. The Panel will also develop a way of indicating the origin of the various tools and methodologies for all sources listed in paragraph 9 above.

11. Information on options for presenting content included in the catalogue to users is provided in document IPBES/5/INF/14. The Plenary is invited to consider and approve the approach to the development of content outlined in paragraph 10 above and to provide feedback to the secretariat on the presentation of content as described in document IPBES/5/INF/14.

## **II. Methodological guidance to support assessments**

12. Responding to a request by the Plenary, the expert group on policy support tools and methodologies, supported by the secretariat, has begun the development of guidance to ensure the integration of work on policy support tools and methodologies into all relevant deliverables of the IPBES work programme. Specifically, responding to a need identified in the context of the joint second author meeting of the regional assessment on biodiversity and ecosystem services and the land degradation and restoration assessment, the expert group plans to provide a methodological framework and support to assessment authors involved in chapters addressing policy responses (chapter 6 of the regional assessments, chapters 6 and 8 of the assessment on land degradation and restoration and chapter 6 of the global assessment). This framework will facilitate comparability among the regional assessments and allow the global assessment to benefit from a coherent analysis across regions. An outline for the guidance may be found in document IPBES/5/INF/14.

13. The following process is suggested for the development of the guidance and methodological framework:

(a) The guidance will be developed by the expert group on policy support tools and methodologies in conjunction with experts working on the assessments;

(b) The expert group will further develop guidance on assessing the effectiveness of tools and methods within the context of IPBES, building on earlier versions of the module on policy support tools prepared for inclusion in the guide to assessments (deliverable 2 (a)) and drawing on relevant scientific literature as well as the experience of the experts in the task group;

(c) The guidance will be reviewed for approval by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel;

(d) The guidance will be inserted into the guide for assessments by the technical support unit on policy support tools and methodology and used by the unit as a basis for conducting capacity-building activities.

## **III. Capacity-building relevant to the methodological guidance and catalogue**

14. The primary aim of the catalogue on policy support tools and methodologies is to help provide access to available policy support tools and methodologies, information on their effectiveness in various contexts and relevant scientific and technical information, guidance and other material needed to use them in an appropriate and efficient manner. The primary aim of the methodological guidance on policy support tools and methodologies is to help assessment experts to identify and assess the effectiveness of relevant tools and methodologies in IPBES assessments, to guide policy-makers in the appropriate selection and use of tools and methods identified in assessments or supporting the implementation of key messages of assessments and to ensure that new tools and methodologies are developed.

15. As the catalogue and methodological guidance are developed, the secretariat and the technical support unit will liaise with those responsible for other work programme deliverables in order to identify where capacity-building is necessary and will then work with the task force on capacity-building and its technical support unit to plan capacity-building activities, including through working with partner organizations.

## IV. The role of the expert group

16. Until the sixth session of the Plenary the expert group is expected:

(a) To support the further development, testing and implementation of the online catalogue of policy-support tools and methodologies, including through the integration of the catalogue of assessments into the online catalogue;

(b) To support the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel in the development of the guidance on quality assurance and governance foreseen in paragraph 10 above and the development of content for the catalogue following the approach outlined in the present paragraph;

(c) To support the development of methodological guidance and, in that context, to continue to work with existing assessments and other relevant activities regarding its implementation;

(d) To work with the capacity-building task force to identify ways to develop capacities for more effective assessment, development and use of policy support tools and methodologies;

(e) To support, as necessary, the evaluation by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel of the use and effectiveness of the online prototype of the catalogue in the context of the process for the review of IPBES (deliverable 4 (e)).

17. It is suggested that the mandate of the expert group on policy support tools and methodologies be extended until the seventh session of the IPBES Plenary to allow the group to advance the implementation of the online catalogue by undertaking the work outlined in the previous paragraph in order to strengthen the work on policy support tools and methodologies across assessments, in particular the global assessment, and other deliverables.

18. To enable this work, it is suggested that one meeting of the expert group be organized each year. The meeting to be held in 2017 would result in additional costs of \$50,000, which are included in the proposed adjustments to the 2017 approved budget in document IPBES/5/10. The need for a further meeting in 2018 should be reviewed by the Plenary at its sixth session based on progress during the next intersessional period and a clearly defined need.

## V. Suggested actions by the Plenary

19. The Plenary may wish to:

(a) *Welcome* the progress made and next steps planned in the work of the expert group on policy support tools and methodologies regarding the development of the online catalogue of policy support tools and methodologies and in providing support for ongoing IPBES assessments;<sup>1</sup>

(b) *Approve* the approach to catalogue content development set out in annex [ ]<sup>2</sup> and request the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, supported by the expert group on policy support tools and methodologies and the secretariat, and in consultation with the Bureau, to:

(i) Further develop guidance for the submission, review, including quality control, and management, of the content to be included in the online catalogue;

(ii) Invite the submission of relevant policy support tools and methodologies by experts, Governments and stakeholders for inclusion in the online catalogue and to oversee the development of the catalogue;

(iii) Undertake an evaluation of the use and effectiveness of the online prototype of the catalogue in the context of the reviews to inform the future development of the Platform (deliverable 4 (e));

(c) *Extend* the mandate of the expert group on policy support tools and methodologies until the seventh session of the Plenary and request the group to report on progress at the sixth and seventh sessions of the Plenary.

<sup>1</sup> IPBES/5/8.

<sup>2</sup> The draft approach is set out in paragraphs 9 and 10.