



SCB POSITION PAPER ON IPBES 2nd Session, April 2012

General Views on IPBES

SCB strongly believes that decision-making needs to rest upon accurate, relevant, and timely information, and acknowledges that both the science-policy and the science-management interface of biodiversity and ecosystem services need to be strengthened. We share this view with many stakeholders, including a vast majority of the partners active within the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD), other treaties, and conventions. Accordingly we support the establishment of IPBES, as a new, independent mechanism to support policy formulation at the national, regional, and global level. Many existing multinational environmental agreements (MEAs) could benefit from policy-relevant, scientific advice and assessments that such a body or network could provide. As a flexible mechanism IPBES should be capable of responding to requests from MEAs, regional organizations, national governments, and potentially a broad range of civil society actors, including the scientific community at-large.

SCB suggests there are two fundamental principles that should guide the establishment and operation of IPBES: (1) that the existing policy processes must be guided by the best available knowledge; and (2) that science, in its widest sense, must be a primary source of this knowledge. This knowledge should include a system of periodic assessments of the status and trends of biodiversity, the critical issues relating to efficient and effective conservation, and the restoration and management of biodiversity and its components. SCB believes that its own network of conservation professionals – which is already organized in regional sections and subject matter working groups and committees – can contribute to this mechanism in all phases of its operations.

To deliver on the Busan mandate, those establishing IPBES need to consider three basic requirements:

- (1) **Independence** - The mechanisms of IPBES should be independent from those of the established MEAs, and should also be independent from political influence in its scientific work and related governance.
- (2) **Credibility** – It is crucial that all reports from IPBES be evidence-based and subject to independent peer review by experts; and
- (3) **Legitimacy** – While the intergovernmental structure will secure legitimacy in the policy processes by building on IPBES reports, it is equally important to secure a sense of common ownership within the scientific community by integrating independent scientists in the governance structure of IPBES.

Short SCB Position Statements for the 2nd session

SCB submitted extensive comments on the Draft Work Plan and Rules of Procedure in December of 2011 and in preparation for the April meeting. Here below are short summaries and additional recommendations:

I. Rules of Procedure

- Relevant stakeholder organizations should obtain observer status upon request as long as not more than 2/3 of the plenary objects.



- Scientific observer organizations should have the right to speak during plenary meetings, nominate experts to all subsidiary bodies and working groups, and suggest topics for review.
- A distinction should be made between stakeholder organizations that represent knowledge holders (both traditional/indigenous knowledge holders and scientific knowledge holders) as separate from other stakeholders who primarily apply and utilize existing knowledge.
- The rules of procedure should include a process for ensuring that officers of the Secretariat, Bureau, and any subsidiary body (Chairs, Executive Bureau, Science Panel, Policy Panel, Review Panel, Working Groups, etc.) are elected based on their personal capacity and relevant expertise in science or the law/policy/science interface.

II. Rules of Procedure - Management of Reports

- All scientific reports, proposals to undertake them, including their design, should be subjected to an independent peer-review process to ensure scientific quality and policy relevance. This should preferably be managed by a review panel as a separate subsidiary body of IPBES.
- IPBES should adopt policies that best reflect the diverse nature of its mandate and stakeholders. The procedures established and revised in recent years by the IPCC for accepting, adopting and approving reports should be considered by IPBES as the model from which to build upon to ensure both independence and political legitimacy.
- Minority, concurring opinions, and scientific uncertainties should be fully included in reports. In case the plenary cannot reach consensus while approving reports, a majority decision should be taken and presented, along with minority and concurring reports (agreeing with the majority conclusion but for different reasons/causes), which contain the objections to the majority report and the scientific basis for such objections in the peer reviewed/other credible literature.
- Voting procedures need to include a mechanism in order to ensure that majority, minority and concurring reports, if they are based on substantial, credible data and analysis, are not capable of being vetoed by a single member.

III. Function and Structures of Bodies Under IPBES

- With respect to subsidiary bodies of IPBES, SCB believes that whichever option for an expanded bureau is adopted, that the subsidiary bodies allow for meaningful stakeholder participation to ensure a strong and credible science/policy presence in the expanded bureau.
- The establishment of working groups can be done after IPBES is established. However, if this issue is discussed, working groups should have an integrated policy component to ensure that all work activities are prioritized according to the practical implications and policy and management consequences of their work product, (for example, by providing scientific definitions or identifying best practices in key provisions/obligations of existing MEA).
- IPBES should include procedures to disclose and curtail potential financial conflicts of interest.

IV. Work Program

- SCB believes that knowledge generation, assessment, policy support, and capacity-building are all essential functions for IPBES to have the potential for success. It is therefore important that a structure and a specific work program be established that address the scale (global, regional, national implementation) and scope (focusing on the most pressing issues) so that products from IPBES can be delivered in a reasonable time and by way of a reasonable process.

V. IPBES Budget

- IPBES should have sufficient funds and spending authority to ensure that it gets legal and scientific advice that is independent of any conflicts of interest.
- The Busan Agreement and all subsequent negotiations regarding IPBES have been based on the premise that budget contributions to the IPBES should be voluntary. Given the importance of the work product of IPBES, the potential size of the initial budget proposal should not be seen as a justification for impeding or blocking the establishment of the IPBES.