

## **Press release**

### **New Intergovernmental Body Established to Accelerate Global Response towards Sustainable Management of World's Biodiversity and Ecosystems**

#### **German City of Bonn Wins Bid to Host Secretariat**

#### **Science, Key to Conservation and Development**

**Panama City, 23 April 2012** - After several years of international negotiations, the final operational design of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) was agreed yesterday.

The German city of Bonn, which hosts such treaties as the UN Environment Programme's (UNEP) Convention on Migratory Species, won the bid to host the secretariat of the new independent body at a meeting held in Panama City.

IPBES aims to tackle head-on the accelerating worldwide loss of biodiversity and degradation of ecosystem service by bridging the gap between accurate, impartial and up to date science and policy-makers.

Although many organizations and initiatives contribute to improving the dialogue between policy-makers and the scientific community in this field, IPBES is established as a new platform, recognized by both the scientific and policy communities to address the existing gaps and strengthen the science-policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services.

"Today, biodiversity won", said the chair of the meeting, Sir Robert Watson, Chief Scientific Advisor of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs of the United Kingdom. "Over 90 governments successfully established the science-policy interface for all countries. Biodiversity and ecosystem services are essential for human wellbeing. This platform will generate the knowledge and build the capacity to protect them for this and future generations," he said.

UNEP has been requested to continue to facilitate the platform on an interim basis, in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). One or more of these UN bodies will administer the IPBES Secretariat, once it is finally established.

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director, said, "Years of often complex debate and political negotiations have today reached a positive conclusion and a milestone in terms of humanity's future response to reversing biodiversity loss and the degradation of ecosystems from forests to freshwaters."

"I would like to congratulate Germany for having been voted the host of the Secretariat of this new science-policy platform. UNEP looks forward to working with partners within and outside the UN system to make this new body the success it undoubtedly will be," he added.

Elsa Nickel, Deputy Director General of the German Directorate of Nature Conservation and Sustainable use of Natural Resources, thanked the participants for the confidence in the offer put forward by Germany, assuring that the government is committed to supporting the new body. “We call on governments to work together very closely, especially the five bidding countries (South Korea, India, Kenya and France) to make IPBES a real success story,” she said.

Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, said, “The creation of IPBES, just a few weeks away from the Rio+20 Conference, is a strong signal, and I congratulate this significant progress towards the conservation of biodiversity.”

“I hope that this body will allow biodiversity to be better taken into account in sustainable development strategies, as did the IPCC for climate change over the last 20 years. Biodiversity loss is a key indicator of the changes which are affecting our planet”. She added that IPBES “will provide a more efficient coordination tool between researchers and decision-makers in order to rise to this challenge. UNESCO has supported this process since its inception and will do everything to bring its long experience and to mobilize its scientific networks in the fields of water, oceans and biodiversity in the service of IPBES,” she added.

The core functions of IPBES will encompass the following areas:

- To identify and prioritise key scientific information needed for policymakers and to catalyse efforts to generate new knowledge;
- To perform regular and timely assessments of knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystem services and their interlinkages;
- To support policy formulation and implementation by identifying policy-relevant tools and methodologies; and
- To prioritise key capacity-building needs to improve the science-policy interface, and to provide and call for financial and other support for the highest-priority needs related directly to its activities.

According to UNDP Administrator, Helen Clark, UNDP sees the proposed Platform as “critically important to support implementation of the new Strategic Plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity and to promote global sustainable development. We know that healthy ecosystems provide invaluable services that underpin development, particularly for the billions of people worldwide who depend directly on biodiversity for their livelihoods. We believe that IPBES can help ensure that developing countries and communities have access to sound scientific information to inform development policies, protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services in a way that addresses poverty alleviation and promotes growth with equity”.

“Calls have been made for UNDP, with our strong track record on capacity development and our significant portfolio of work on biodiversity and ecosystem services for development, to engage in the arena of capacity building for IPBES. We believe such capacity building can strengthen the platform enormously, and should be closely interwoven with the other work streams on knowledge generation, assessments, and policy support tools and methodologies”, said Helen Clark.

José Graziano da Silva, Director-General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), said, “Biodiversity is essential for food security. Thousands of interconnected

species make up a vital web of biodiversity in ecosystems upon which global food production depends. With the erosion of biodiversity, mankind loses the potential to adapt agro-ecosystems to new challenges like population growth and climate change. Achieving food security for all is intrinsically linked with maintaining biodiversity. We welcome the creation of this platform and are pleased to be supporting it.”

IPBES will respond to requests for scientific information related to biodiversity and ecosystem services from governments, relevant multilateral environmental agreements and United Nations bodies, as well as other relevant stakeholders.

A core trust fund will be established to receive voluntary contributions from governments, United Nations bodies, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), other intergovernmental organisations and other stakeholders, such as the private sector and foundations.

### **Various Bodies Welcome New Institutional Arrangements**

Representatives from the scientific community, non-governmental organizations, indigenous peoples and the business sector met in Panama prior to the intergovernmental meeting to debate the modalities needed for the establishment of the new body.

Jane Smart, representative of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), said it was “really important to build on existing knowledge. Many of the stakeholders have built up a wealth of data over several decades which we would be very pleased to make available to this new science-policy platform. Such information comes from a diverse range of social and biophysical scientific communities”.

Carolyn Lundquist, representative of the Society for Conservation Biology, stressed “the need to enhance the transparency of the platform through direct involvement of stakeholders and civil society organizations as observers.

Indigenous peoples’ representatives welcomed the inclusion of indigenous knowledge and diverse knowledge holders in the work of IPBES. Joji Cariño, the representative of the Tebtebba Foundation, highlighted that “Indigenous peoples and local communities hold in-depth and time-depth knowledge about biodiversity and ecosystems, complementary to science and important for decision-making.”

Anne Larigauderie, speaking on behalf of the International Council for Science (ICSU) and the United Nations University (UNU), praised the decision to establish a Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) to perform the scientific and technical functions of IPBES. “This will ensure scientific independence, as well as the representation of the mix of disciplines necessary to address future requests from the IPBES Plenary”. She also welcomed “the decision to start implementing IPBES now, through an ambitious intersessional work programme”.

The group of stakeholders conveyed a joint statement to the government representatives on the first day of the meeting. They re-affirmed their “strong interest in IPBES, both as contributors of knowledge and end users of IPBES products”. The stakeholders also recommended that “procedures be established for the independent review and evaluation of the platform’s efficiency, effectiveness and impact on a periodic basis and

act on its recommendations”. The participants stressed “the importance of building capacities at international, regional, sub-regional, national, sub-national and local levels for the knowledge generation, assessments and policy support functions of the platform”.

The launch of the IPBES adds to the gathering momentum for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) to be held in June in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It is anticipated that IPBES will become the key focal point for all agencies and organisations involved in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development and that the Platform will raise the issue on the political agenda, in the same way that the IPCC raised the climate change issue.

### **Notes for editors**

IPBES overview—role, mandate and key principles:

- To collaborate with existing initiatives on biodiversity and ecosystem services, including multilateral environmental agreements, United Nations bodies and networks of scientists and knowledge holders, to fill gaps and build upon their work, while avoiding duplication;
- To be scientifically independent and ensure credibility, relevance and legitimacy through the peer review of its work and transparency in its decision-making processes;
- To 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;
- To recognise and respect the contribution of indigenous and local knowledge to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems;
- To provide policy-relevant information, but not policy-prescriptive advice, mindful of the respective mandates of the multilateral environmental agreements;
- To integrate capacity-building into all relevant aspects of its work according to priorities decided by the plenary;
- To recognise the unique biodiversity and scientific knowledge thereof within and among regions, and also recognise the need for the full and effective participation of developing countries and for balanced regional representation and participation in its structure and work;
- To take an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach that incorporates all relevant disciplines, including social and natural sciences;
- To recognise the need for gender equity in all relevant aspects of its work;
- To address terrestrial, marine and inland water biodiversity and ecosystem services and their interactions;
- To ensure the full use of national, subregional and regional assessments and knowledge, as appropriate.

More information is available at:

<http://www.ipbes.net/>

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