

The German view on IPBES as a key new process of international biodiversity policy

Final declaration

of the information and discussion Workshop
**Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services –
Incorporating German Views and Expertise**
Bonn, 7 – 8 July 2011

From 7 to 8 July 2011, over 80 experts from research, administration and civil society met in Bonn for a Workshop to discuss expectations and opportunities for participation in the "Intergovernmental science-policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services" (IPBES)" from the point of view of German research institutions and communities. The Workshop was hosted by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) and the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) and organised by the Network Forum on Biodiversity Research Germany (NeFo), a project of Diversitas-Deutschland e.V. The Workshop drew the following conclusions:

Conclusions of the Workshop

The participants in the German workshop expressly welcome the decision of the United Nations General Assembly to establish IPBES as a key instrument for effectively combating the global decline in biodiversity; this will help, for example, to achieve the 2020 and 2050 objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and support the goals of the new EU Biodiversity Strategy.

The participants consider as one of the main tasks of IPBES to better interlink existing knowledge on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services, and promoting greater cross-sectoral use of that knowledge as a basis for political decision-making processes at global, regional, national and local level. On this note, IPBES should also support processes which identify gaps in knowledge and formulate action-based priorities for further research activities. To achieve this it is important to design the structure for the four IPBES areas of activity planned to date in a substantial and stable manner, and to ensure that they work together effectively.

As specified in the Busan Outcome¹, the outcome document of the third UNEP meeting on IPBES that took the decision to establish the new platform, the structure and operating principles of the platform should be scientifically independent – i.e. not influenced by outside interests. Working processes must be transparent and scientifically credible. The aim of IPBES is to make recommendations which are policy-relevant but not

¹ Cf. "Busan Outcome", UNEP/IPBES/3/3

policy-prescriptive. It must ensure the full and effective participation of developing countries and incorporate local and indigenous knowledge.

The following institutions, organisations and panels in the field of biodiversity and global change research, as well as from civil society, supported these conclusions with their own statements on the Workshop²:

- DIVERSITAS-Germany
- National Committee on Global Change Research (NKGCF)
- German Research Foundation (DFG), Senate Commission on Biodiversity Research
- German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU)
- Helmholtz Association of German Research Centres, WG Biodiversity (HGF)
- Leibniz Gemeinschaft: Leibniz Verbund Biodiversität (LVB) – Leibniz Association Biodiversity
- Gesellschaft für Ökologie (GfÖ) - Ecological Society of Germany, Austria and Switzerland
- Society for Tropical Ecology (GTÖ)
- Verband Botanischer Gärten (VBG) – Botanical Garden Association
- German Life Sciences Association (VBio)
- Konsortium Deutscher Naturwissenschaftlicher Forschungssammlungen (DNFS) – Consortium of German Scientific Collections
- German Marine Research Consortium (KDM)
- Global Biodiversity Information Facility Germany (GBIF-D)
- Senatsarbeitsgruppe Biodiversität der Forschungsinstitute im BMELV – Senat working group of biodiversity related research institutes in the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection
- IUCN Species Survival Commission
- Naturschutzbund Deutschland (NABU) - German Society for Nature Conservation
- Bund für Umwelt- und Naturschutz Deutschland (BUND) - Friends of the Earth Germany
- World Wide Fund for Nature Germany (WWF Deutschland)

There was general consensus at the Workshop that the German research community on biodiversity and ecosystem services was willing to contribute to and participate in the work of IPBES with its broad expertise.

The offer by the German Federal Government to accommodate the IPBES Secretariat in Bonn was expressly welcomed. The participants felt this was in keeping with the quality and relevance of German biodiversity research and would help further raise the profile of their own research achievements.

² The detailed written statements are available (in German) at <http://www.biodiversity.de/index.php/de/biodiversitaet/biodiversitaet-international/ipbes>

Further aspects on the development of IPBES³

In the view of the Workshop participants the following aspects should also be taken into consideration in the further development of the key areas of activity and the structures of IPBES:

General

The following are seen as general challenges for IPBES:

- **Cooperation between the four areas of activity:** a common, effective design and good coordination among the four areas of activity is essential for IPBES to function successfully.
- **Communication und products:** one of the goals of IPBES should be to support a broad social debate on the value and importance of biological diversity and the ecosystem services it provides. To this end, an effective, forward-looking, dialogue-based communication strategy (press division, use of new media, inclusion of media diversity etc) geared to specific target groups must be formulated and implemented. Internally, scientific discourse processes need to be organised and supported.
- **Forms of knowledge and peer review:** the importance of empirical knowledge of biodiversity and ecosystem services must be taken seriously in all the areas of activity, while traditional and indigenous knowledge must be equally recognised and incorporated into the work. Quality assurance mechanisms must be elaborated and established.
- **Active national focal point:** some participants felt it was important to establish a national focal point in Germany for (a) observing the IPBES process, (b) organising the flow of information and (c) incorporating scientists into the processes. The Workshop participants agreed that this option should be investigated further.
- **Inclusion of the German research community:** broad involvement of German experts from all relevant disciplines in the bodies and areas of activity (for instance as authors of the assessments) should be aimed for.

Area of activity: Assessments

The structure of this area of activity should include the following aspects:

Credibility and relevance to policy:

- To ensure that the assessment results have a high credibility, they must be independent and transparent (in determination of criteria, appointment of authors on the basis of excellence, data

³ Working groups presented and discussed further aspects of the development of IPBES at the workshop. The summary reports on the findings of these discussions, but this was not agreed in detail with all participants and the summary is therefore not exhaustive.

selection). Ambiguities must be expressly indicated and review procedures standardised (with extended peer review).

- The selection and use of the best data/indicators/experts should be aimed for. For this purpose a corresponding scoping should be conducted (see area of activity Knowledge Generation).
- The development of a standard catalogue of questions to be addressed by the assessments and the specification of quality standards should be considered.
- A Scientific Advisory Board should be set up to ensure quality.
- Achieving high political relevance requires the broad involvement of the knowledge community (interdisciplinary). There should also be a scoping process between science and decision-makers on questions for the assessments, in order to include a scientific viewpoint in the questions.
- To achieve pertinent results stakeholders should be adequately involved in IPBES processes and bodies, for instance through a Stakeholder Advisory Board.
- The assessments should take account consequences for all sections of society (different policy areas, economy etc.).
- Results of assessments and IPBES recommendations should be presented appropriately for each target group and taken into consideration in political decisions.

Support of regional and global assessments:

- Assessments should build on existing experience. Where possible, they should apply uniform frameworks/standards for data and indicators and use existing methods of data integration.
- It would be useful to establish a hierarchical network across scales. This would allow to deal with each scale level in an optimal and geographical explicit way, and to integrate these levels into a hierarchical concept.
- The focus should be on in-depth explanation of dominating processes in the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services at different scales. This should be taken as the basis for deriving indicators.
- Local and indigenous knowledge should be incorporated at the national and regional levels.
- Existing networks, for instance of taxonomists for assessments of species diversity, should be used.

Area of activity Capacity Building

Capacity building is considered a cross-cutting topic for the work of IPBES and relates to all other areas of activity (e.g. facilitating dialogue between policy-makers, science and society) as well as to the basis for cooperation in both developing and industrialised countries.

The structure of this area of activity should include the following aspects:

- Support for securing, developing and communicating knowledge on biodiversity in developing, newly industrialising and industrialised countries.
- Securing and expanding institutional capacities as a form of benefit sharing.

- Promoting existing cooperations and initiatives (in the sense of good practices) and their multilateral networking.
- Supporting harmonisation of the legal framework in member states for research on biodiversity (incl. the Nagoya Protocol).
- Prioritising issues for capacity building and making funding options accessible.

Area of activity Policy Tools and Methodologies

Distinguishing between normative and empirical discourse is a key challenge for the overall process of this activity area. Moreover, it is particularly important to promote cooperation between the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities (e.g. political economics, cultural sciences, philosophy), thus strengthening interdisciplinary research.

The structure of this area of activity should include the following aspects:

- Actively surveying and communicating needs, as well as defining analysis needs by means of discourse.
- Developing structured and balanced stakeholder processes to discuss policy options, also in a regional context – such as e.g. community-based assessments or dialogue on the analysis of the need for and success of measures.
- Support and establishment of knowledge brokers/ synthesisers as
 - Moderators for the stakeholder processes
 - Mediators of knowledge between researchers and policy-makers.
- Specific examples from experience gained from political measures in Germany could be incorporated, for instance regarding environmental impact assessment instruments, environmental planning and impact mitigation.

The development of analyses and products should take the following aspects into account:

- No propagation of standard solutions, consideration of heterogenic nature (and regional context) of the situations in question.
- Incorporation of and collaboration with development cooperation.
- Development of products tailored for different target groups:
 - Scenarios, cost-benefit analyses and risk analyses for decision-makers
 - Impact analyses and monitoring the success of measures taken
 - Fact sheets und policy briefs
 - Policy learning approaches to introduce policy developers to practical problems on site
 - Comics and other innovative approaches aimed at the public
 - Interactive, intuitive knowledge/dialogue platform for exchanges between different groups.

Area of activity Knowledge Generation

The structure of this area of activity should include the following aspects:

- In a broad process, existing knowledge must be identified, assembled, secured, made available and evaluated. Uncertainties in knowledge must be expressly stated.
- Due to major differences in the status of and need for knowledge in the regions, the above process should have a primarily regional focus. In this respect each region may need to conduct its own assessment of the situation and of the accessibility of available biodiversity knowledge.
- To effectively identify the need for knowledge, IPBES should act as a mediator in a dialogue process between science, politics and society. Universities, research institutes, scientific societies, other experts and the financiers of research should be involved on the science side.
- This efficient interface between IPBES, researchers and research financiers should focus on problem-based research.
- In order to ensure sustainable input from research and monitoring, long-term funding structures and infrastructures must be discussed and further developed.
- In this context, the proactive identification of urgent areas of action for research and policy – irrespective of the political priorities at the time – is also seen as a task for science.
- Another possible task for this area of activity is to support standardisation of concepts, methods and data formats, and the support and further development of a global monitoring system.
- IPBES should have a supporting effect and create incentives for linking research on biodiversity and ecosystem services with other fields of research (e.g. health, trade).
- The discussions should also cover access and benefit sharing.

Possible priority topics for IPBES

The participants in the Workshop also discussed possible priority topics for the initial phase of IPBES, in particular for the areas Assessments and Knowledge Generation. They stressed that the topics selected for first assessments must highlight the value added and benefit which the IPBES approach offers to society and to the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services (e.g. regarding their relevance for decisions).

A list of possible topics comprises:

- Focus on global extinction: developing methods for recording and regulated monitoring, inclusion of historical data.
- Ecosystem services: definition, parameters and relation to biodiversity at different geographical scales.
- Connection between land use (productivity and sustainability) and biodiversity and ecosystem services, incl. review of legislation and policy measures, e.g. nature conservation instruments (and their effects at global level), and identifying conflicts of aims in land use.

- Geographically explicit evaluation of the status and development of biodiversity and ecosystem services (realised and potential), especially including scale-dependent patterns and influencing factors.
- Status and development of ecosystems, key species and hotspots, and their relationship to one another (marine and terrestrial).
- Identifying and discussing problems relating to possible tipping points at various scale levels.
- Assessing the importance and impact on biodiversity and ecosystem services of different policy areas.
- Assessing assessments and cooperating with other assessments (building on UNEP's gap analysis).
- Assessing capacities and expertise relating to biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- Evaluating the monitoring of indicator species (over and above the species and groups surveyed to date).

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