

The Global Biodiversity Outlook 5: Integrating the IPBES Global Assessment

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Vegetables sold on a Korean food market © Katja Heubach



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During its 20th meeting, the Subsidiary Body of Technical, Technological and Scientific Advice (SBSTTA) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will discuss how the assessments of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Service (IPBES) will feed into the preparation of the fifth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO-5), which is the flagship publication of the Convention.

BACKGROUND¹

In its decision XII/1, the Conference of the Parties at its 12th meeting to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD-COP-12, Pyeongchang, Korea, 2014), requested its Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) to evaluate the scope, process and findings of the fifth *Global Biodiversity Outlook* (GBO-5) in the light of the ongoing work of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) on a global assessment on biodiversity and ecosystem services.

SBSTTA recommended that GBO-5 should provide a final evaluation on the achievements with regard to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and give an outlook of the follow-up to this plan starting in 2021. This evaluation should draw on the sixth national reports submitted by CBD parties, an evaluation of global indicators, as well as the regional, global and thematic assessments on biodiversity and ecosystem services carried out by IPBES. GBO-5 will be reviewed by the COP during its 15th meeting in 2020.

FEEDING INTO GBO-5: THE IPBES GLOBAL ASSESSMENT ON BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

At its fourth plenary meeting, in February 2016, IPBES finalized and adopted the scoping report for its global assessment on biodiversity and ecosystem services.²

The global assessment will assess the state of knowledge on past, present and possible future trends in multi-scale interactions between people and nature, taking into consideration different world views and knowledge systems³, addressing the following key questions:

- What is the status of and trends in nature, nature's benefits to people, and indirect and direct drivers of change?
- How do nature and its benefits to people contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals? What is the evidence-base that can be used for assessing progress towards the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets?
- What are the plausible futures for nature, nature's benefits to people and their

² The scoping report is available in all official languages of the United Nations at: <http://www.ipbes.net>.

³ Diaz et al (2015) A Rosetta Stone for Nature's Benefits to People, PLOS 13 1 available at <http://journals.plos.org/plosbiology/article?id=10.1371/journal.pbio.1002040>; and Diaz et al, 2015 The IPBES Conceptual Framework — connecting nature and people, Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability, 14, Pages 1–16, available at: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S187734351400116X>. See also: <http://www.ipbes.net/conceptual-framework>.

¹ Source: UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/20/13

contribution to a good quality of life between now and 2050?

- What pathways and policy intervention scenarios relating to nature, nature's benefit to people and their contributions to good quality of life can lead to sustainable futures?
- What are the opportunities and challenges, as well as options available to decision makers at all levels relating to nature, nature's benefit to people and their contributions to good quality of life?

Given this scope, the knowledge synthesized by the assessment will excellently feed into the given outline of GBO-5, complementing the information collected on basis of national reports and global indicators.

As the assessment is to be expected for the beginning of 2019, SBSTTA will be able to review it later that year and subsequently submit its recommendations to COP-15 in 2020.

FEEDING INTO GBO-5: THE IPBES METHODOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF SCENARIOS AND MODELS OF BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

A second output of IPBES which is expected to fundamentally feed into GBO-5 is its methodological assessments of scenarios and models of biodiversity and ecosystem services, which was just released in February 2016, during the 4th meeting of IPBES in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (IPBES-4).

The assessment provides guidance for the use of scenarios and models in the regional, global and thematic assessments conducted under the Platform, as well as how to use them to inform policymaking in a variety of contexts.⁴

⁴ "Models" are qualitative or quantitative descriptions of key components of a system and of relationships between those components. The assessment focuses mainly on models describing relationships between: (i) indirect and direct drivers; (ii) direct drivers and nature; and (iii) nature and nature's benefits to people. "Scenarios" are representations of possible futures for one or more components of a system, particularly, in the assessment, for drivers of change in nature and nature's benefits, including alternative policy or management options.

Moreover, it will be useful for carrying out national and other subnational assessments.

The major findings of the assessments are:

- Different types of scenarios can play important roles in relation to the major phases of the policy cycle: (a) agenda setting, (b) policy design, (c) policy implementation, and (d) policy review. Retrospective policy evaluation (ex-post-evaluation) could be a powerful tool in supporting SBSTTA in its task to assess the effectiveness of types of measures taken in accordance with the provisions of the Convention
- Spatial and temporal scales at which scenarios and models need to be applied vary markedly among different policy and decision contexts. Such combinations of scenario and modelling approaches would also be desirable for GBO-5, given its dual role in assessing the achievement of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity to 2020 and providing the technical basis for a follow-up strategy including its alignment with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda as well as the 2050 vision.
- Links between biodiversity, ecosystem functioning and ecosystem services are only weakly accounted for in most assessments or in policy design and implementation and that the same is true for links between ecosystem services and quality of life. Any advances made in these areas over the coming years could also be beneficial for GBO-5 and would also help to address some of the technical and scientific needs identified by Parties at SBSTTA-17.

TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS RELATED TO THE PROPOSED GUIDELINES FOR THE SIXTH NATIONAL REPORTS

In the same decision XII/1, the COP also requested the Executive Secretary to develop a proposal on guidelines for the sixth national report to be provided to its member states, to ensure a transparent and replicable target-by-target analysis of progress the parties made towards the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

The national reports should:

- Provide self-assessments by countries of progress towards each national biodiversity target set in line with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC)
- Identify lessons learned, specific technical, scientific and capacity needs, as well areas for further work
- Support the assessment of the achievement of Aichi Biodiversity Target 20 (mobilizing financial resources for implementing the Strategic Plan 2011-2020)

In order to evaluate the progress they have made regarding achieving the Aichi Targets over time, member states are required to refer to the following five categories (which are consistent with those used in the 4th edition of the GBO):

- *On track to exceed target* – National actions taken will allow for the criteria/thresholds established by the target to be exceeded
- *On track to achieve target* – National actions taken, and the current status of the issues addressed by the target, indicate that the target will be met by the target deadline
- *Progress towards target but at an insufficient rate* – Significant progress towards the attainment of the target has been made, however, the progress that has been made will be insufficient for the target to be met by the deadline
- *No significant change* – There has been either no significant progress towards the attainment of the target or no significant deterioration; no significant actions to reach the target have been taken

- *Moving away from target* – This category indicates that the issues the target is seeking to address are deteriorating (due to no actions have been taken, actions taken have been ineffective, pressures are increasing or other changes to national circumstances).

Because of differences in national targets and potentially different interpretations of global targets that do not include numerical elements, as well as differences in the assessment approaches, the scores would not be used for comparison among countries.

Additionally, three levels of confidence are proposed for use in the sixth national reports:

- *Based on comprehensive evidence* – This level of confidence implies that indicators and additional sources of information exist to support the assessment and that these allow for all elements of the target to be assessed;
- *Based on partial evidence* – This level of confidence implies that some indicators exist for assessing progress towards the target but that not all elements can be assessed with indicators or that the indicators have limitation. Therefore additional sources of information have been used to fill gaps;
- *Based on limited evidence* – This level of confidence implies that there are few or no indicators to assess progress towards the target and that the assessment draws heavily on other types of information reconciled with expert opinion. For this reason, the assessment is largely based on expert opinion.

To facilitate the reporting process, an online reporting tool has been designed, which allows Parties to prepare and submit their national report electronically.

IMPRESSUM

The Network-Forum for Biodiversity Research Germany (NeFo) is a project funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and is mainly carried out by the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research – UFZ and the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin.



For more information about the NeFo-Project and the NeFo-Team visit www.biodiversity.de.