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

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

**Report of the Executive Secretary on the implementation
of the work programme 2014–2018****Implementation of the work programme for 2014–2018****Report of the Executive Secretary****I. Introduction**

1. At its second session, the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services adopted decision IPBES-2/5, by which it approved an ambitious work programme with a sequenced set of deliverables for the period 2014–2018. The work programme was approved on the understanding that work on deliverables would be initiated following active decisions by the Plenary in accordance with the procedures for the preparation of the deliverables of the Platform. In that decision, the Plenary also initiated and guided work on all but one of the work programme deliverables with the intention of returning to the matter at its third session.

2. At its third session, the Plenary adopted decision IPBES-3/1, in which it provided further guidance on the implementation of the 18 work programme deliverables, including by paying particular attention to the assessment deliverables under objectives 2 and 3.

3. The present report has been prepared by the Executive Secretary, in consultation with the Bureau and the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, to facilitate the consideration by the Plenary of the implementation of the work programme. As a basis for its consideration, the Plenary is provided with information on the following matters:

(a) Progress on the implementation of deliverables set out in the work programme initiated by decisions IPBES-2/5 and IPBES-3/1;

(b) Further lessons learned by the Bureau, the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the secretariat over the course of 2015, the second year of implementation of the work programme, building on lessons learned in 2014.

**II. Progress in the implementation of decisions IPBES-2/5 and
IPBES-3/1 on the work programme for 2014–2018**

4. In 2015, five assessment author groups and one time-bound scoping group were established. Three task forces, two assessment author groups and three time-bound expert groups established in 2014 continued their work in 2015. Altogether, these groups involved some 1,000 selected experts and a total of 24 meetings were held.¹ Seven new institutional arrangements, with six technical support

* IPBES/4/1.

¹ Meetings include the fifth and sixth meetings of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau meetings, but exclude the third and fourth sessions of the Plenary.

units and one consultant, were established following in-kind offers received from Governments and organizations. Those come in addition to the six arrangements concluded in 2014. More information on institutional arrangements is set out in IPBES/4/INF/18.

Objective 1

Strengthen the capacity and knowledge foundations of the science-policy interface to implement key functions of the Platform

5. Three task forces with technical support units were established in 2014 for the period 2014–2018. In 2015, progress has been made in the following areas:

(a) The task force on capacity-building (deliverables 1 (a) and (b)) has addressed the priority capacity-building needs set out in decision IPBES-3/1, including by piloting the draft programme on fellowship, exchange and training, as requested in that decision. The piloting has included a fellowship programme for the four regional assessments and the thematic assessment on land degradation and restoration, by which 33 young or early career fellows were selected out of 446 applications received. Training and familiarization sessions associated with each of the five first author meetings for the regional assessments have been held in 2015 and further training activities are under way. The task force has assisted the Bureau and the secretariat in convening the first capacity-building forum with representatives of conventional and potential sources of funding, as requested in decision IPBES-3/1. As foreseen in the decision, a pilot prototype on-line matchmaking facility has been developed with support from the United Nations Development Programme Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services net portal. A call for technical or financial support for planning or implementing capacity-building projects to be piloted on the prototype resulted in some 80 proposals. Recommendations for further action are set out in IPBES/4/6, supported by additional information, such as the report of the first capacity-building forum (see IPBES/4/INF/5);

(b) The task force on indigenous and local knowledge systems (deliverable 1 (c)) has developed draft procedures for working with indigenous and local knowledge as informed by, amongst others, the pilot global dialogue on indigenous and local knowledge for the assessment of pollination and pollinators associated with food production. It has also continued the pilot global dialogue process to mobilize indigenous and local knowledge in the context of the African regional assessment. Criteria and operational guidelines for the establishment of a roster of experts have been developed, together with an approach for the establishment of the participatory mechanism for working with indigenous, local and other knowledge systems. Recommendations for further action are set out in IPBES/4/7, supported by additional information (see IPBES/4/INF/6). Paragraph 9 (c) of section III below sets out lessons learned and challenges regarding work on indigenous and local knowledge systems;

(c) The task force on knowledge and data (deliverables 1 (d) and 4 (b)) has further developed the knowledge and data strategy and guidance on data and information management plans for Platform assessments, as included in the guide for assessments for use by all regions. Highlights of progress in implementation include a proposal on a core set of indicators across the four regions; an online survey on access to literature and initiatives to increase access to literature; the establishment of a repository system to store literature and share among assessment experts; and a literature management system to generate lists of references to be publicly shared. A full progress report is set out in IPBES/4/INF/7.

Objective 2

Strengthen the science-policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services at and across subregional, regional and global levels

6. Progress under objective 2 includes the development of the following:

(a) A guide on production and integration of assessments from and across all scales, developed by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel in consultation with the Bureau, with the support of a time-bound and task-specific expert group (deliverable 2 (a)) (see IPBES/4/INF/9). The guide is a living document that has been updated over the course of 2015 as the various task forces and expert groups have made progress in their work. During 2015, the guide has been used as a basis for briefing first author meetings for the four regional assessments and the thematic assessment of land degradation and restoration;

(b) Four regional and subregional assessments, with final drafts and summaries for policymakers to be ready by early 2018, and first order drafts ready by mid-2016 (deliverable 2 (b)); the establishment of four technical support units in Africa (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, South Africa), Asia-Pacific (Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, Japan), the

Americas (Alexander von Humboldt Biological Resources Research Institute, Colombia) and Europe and Central Asia (University of Bern, Switzerland); the selection of four assessment author groups; and the convening of one first author meeting in each region. Full progress reports on regional assessments and on institutional arrangements are set out in IPBES/4/INF/10 and IPBES/4/INF/18 respectively;

(c) A full scoping report for a global assessment on biodiversity and ecosystem services prepared by a scoping expert group (deliverable 2 (c)), submitted to the Plenary for its consideration at its fourth session (IPBES/4/8); a call for comments by Governments and stakeholders on the scoping report, to be submitted between 13 October and 6 November 2015; and reflection of those comments in the final scoping report.

Objective 3

Strengthen the science-policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services with regard to thematic and methodological issues

7. Progress under objective 3 includes the development of the following:

(a) The final thematic assessment report on pollination and pollinators associated with food production (deliverable 3 (a)), including a technical report (IPBES/4/INF/1) and a summary for policymakers (IPBES/4/3), by an assessment author group, to be considered by the Plenary for acceptance and approval at its fourth session;

(b) A thematic assessment report on land degradation and restoration (deliverable 3 (b) (i)), prepared by an assessment author group, with a technical report and summary for policymakers to be ready by early 2018 and a first order draft to be ready by mid-2016. In order to develop a coordinated approach between the thematic assessment and the regional assessments, one half of the assessment author group contribute as authors to the thematic assessment and the other half contribute as authors to the regional assessments, with an additional two experts per region contributing to both regional and thematic assessments. A full progress report is set out in IPBES/4/INF/11;

(c) Scoping reports for a thematic assessment on invasive alien species (deliverable 3 (b) (ii)) and a thematic assessment of the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity (deliverable 3 (b) (iii)), developed using virtual approaches (e-conferences) and submitted to the Plenary for its approval at its fourth session (IPBES/4/10 and IPBES/4/11 respectively). Experts on the two themes have been selected and are taking part in each of the regional assessments in order to ensure a coordinated approach between regional assessments and the two potential new thematic assessments. A full report on the scoping process is set out in IPBES/4/INF/12;

(d) The final methodological assessment report on scenario analysis and modelling of biodiversity and ecosystem services (deliverable 3 (c)), prepared by an assessment author group and including a technical report (IPBES/4/INF/3) and a summary for policymakers (IPBES/4/4), to be considered by the Plenary for acceptance and approval at its fourth session. Annex I to decision IPBES-2/5 sets out that, based on the findings of the methodological assessment, the deliverable will result in an evolving guide, followed by efforts as directed by the Plenary to catalyse, inter alia, the development of tools and methodologies for scenario analysis and modelling. Accordingly, the Plenary will be invited to consider a proposal on the further development of tools and methodologies regarding scenario analysis and modelling (IPBES/4/5);

(e) A revised scoping report for a methodological assessment on the diverse conceptualization of values of biodiversity and nature's benefits to people (deliverable 3 (d)) by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau, supported by an expert group, which will be submitted to the Plenary for approval at its fourth session (IPBES/4/9). The group has also revised the preliminary guide regarding diverse conceptualization of multiple values of nature and its benefits, including biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services (IPBES/4/INF/13).

Objective 4

Communicate and evaluate Platform activities, deliverables and findings

8. Progress under objective 4 includes the development of the following:

(a) The online catalogue of relevant assessments (deliverable 4 (a)), regularly updated and available at <http://catalog.ipbes.net/>;

(b) A revised catalogue on policy support tools and methodologies (deliverable 4 (c)), based on a review by Platform members, observers and stakeholders, and an online pilot version of the catalogue (IPBES/4/INF/14); and revised guidance, developed by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau, on the manner in which policy support tools and methodologies could be promoted

and catalysed within the context of the Platform, based on a review by Platform members, observers and stakeholders, presented to the Plenary for consideration at its fourth session (IPBES/4/12). The work was supported by an expert group;

(c) Activities in the context of the communications and outreach strategy and of the stakeholder engagement strategy (deliverable 4 (d)) (IPBES/4/18, IPBES/4/INF/15 and IPBES/4/INF/16), as set out in decision IPBES-3/4; the establishment of institutional arrangements to operationalize technical support to several deliverables (IPBES/4/18 and IPBES/4/INF/18); the development of a draft memorandum of cooperation with the multilateral environmental agreements related to biodiversity and ecosystem services, as set out in paragraph 7 of decision IPBES-3/4 (IPBES/4/18, annex I); and steps taken to enter into other strategic partnerships, to be reviewed by the Plenary (IPBES/4/18, annex II);

(d) A procedure for the review of the effectiveness of the administrative and scientific functions of the Platform (deliverable 4 (e)) by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, in consultation with the Bureau (IPBES/4/16), for consideration by the Plenary at its fourth session.

III. Lessons learned and challenges during the second year of implementation (2015)

9. Lessons learned from the implementation of deliverables and challenges relate, in particular, to the following efforts:

(a) *Filling gaps in expertise.* It proved necessary in the context of the selection of experts for the four regional assessments and the land degradation and restoration assessment to seek additional nominations from Governments and stakeholders in order to ensure geographic, disciplinary and gender balance among experts,² particularly with regard to the selection of experts from the Eastern European region and for the selection of experts from social sciences, indigenous and local knowledge holders and policy practitioners. Additional nominations were also necessary in 2014 (see IPBES/3/2) with regard to government nominations for the pollination assessment and the scenarios and modelling assessments. Hence, the Bureau, as advised by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, has decided to invite the Plenary to consider a procedure to fill gaps, as an addition to the procedures for the preparation of the deliverables of the Platform regarding nomination of experts, in order to ensure full transparency of the gap-filling procedure. The procedure will be considered under item 7 (b) and is set out in IPBES/4/15;

(b) *Support to developed country experts.* Experts from developed countries have voiced reservations about being nominated, in view of the lack of travel support, in particular experts from North America, Southern Europe and from those Eastern European countries not supported by the trust fund. The Bureau wishes to draw the attention of the Plenary to such a critical situation and to invite the Plenary to encourage developed country members to provide travel support for experts from their countries and for all institutions to support experts who are taking part in work under the Platform;

(c) *Work on indigenous and local knowledge systems.* The Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau, at their sixth meetings, held in October 2015, decided that they were ready to submit to the Plenary at its fourth session a first set of draft procedures for and approaches to working with indigenous and local knowledge systems as requested in decision IPBES-2/5. To date, only one approach has been tested, namely a global call for indigenous and local knowledge experts through electronic means; the convening of a dialogue workshop involving selected indigenous and local knowledge experts and holders; the publication of the proceedings of the workshop; and the use of those proceedings by the experts. A dialogue workshop has also been held following the same process for the African regional assessment. The Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau are in the process of assessing the strengths and limitations of the pilot phase. They are working with the task force and pollination experts to learn from the experience and are considering new approaches in 2016 within the context of the regional assessments and the land degradation and restoration assessment. The Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau felt that it would be premature to extend the pilot approach tested on a single assessment to all assessments without further analysis and testing;

² In total, 945 experts were selected in response to calls in 2014 and 2015 to perform work for the Platform, distributed as follows: African States, 17 per cent; Asia-Pacific States, 21 per cent; Latin American and Caribbean States, 17 per cent; Eastern European States, 10 per cent; and Western European and other States, 35 per cent. The percentages were similar for governmental and non-governmental nominations. In terms of gender balance, 33 per cent of government nominees were women.

(d) *Management meetings to initiate assessments.* Management meetings involving the co-chairs, the technical support unit, the relevant Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and Bureau members, and the secretariat were held for each of the four regional assessments and for the land degradation and restoration assessment to facilitate the selection process and for fine-tuning the scope, time schedule, roles and responsibilities of all actors and to prepare for the first author meetings. The practice, tested in 2014 and extended to other deliverables in 2015, has proved very helpful and will be used for future assessments;

(e) *Use of electronic conferences to scope for future assessments.* Several initiatives were taken to increase the use of virtual means to conduct meetings. Two scoping reports were produced for invasive alien species and the sustainable use of biodiversity by means of open-access web-based electronic conferences rather than two physical meetings, resulting in total savings of \$165,000 (IPBES/4/10 and IPBES/4/11). The electronic conference worked well for invasive alien species but less so for the sustainable use of biodiversity, which is a broader and more complex topic. The Panel spent some time at its sixth meeting discussing the outcome of the e-conference on the sustainable use of biodiversity, and felt that a scoping meeting would have been beneficial. The recommendation of the Panel was that e-conferences could be used in future as part of the scoping process, but that, for more complex topics, a physical meeting should be held for further discussion of the outcome. It should be noted, however, that the management of the e-conferences was very time-consuming, with comments from several hundred participants having to be screened before posting, and that the secretariat benefited from the assistance of four interns working in shifts and on a voluntary basis;

(f) *Use of other virtual and electronic means.* The secretariat and technical support units convened regular teleconferences involving the Panel, Bureau, stakeholders, co-chairs, coordinating lead authors and lead authors of assessments in various configurations. The secretariat also purchased a multi-licence office productivity system, which is helping in information sharing, programme management and collaboration between the secretariat, technical support units, experts, and Bureau and Panel members in a secure and reliable manner. The productivity system will also help in the preparation, running and follow-up of meetings. While teleconferences and the office productivity system did not result in direct budget savings in terms of meetings avoided, they significantly strengthened coherence in implementation across the work programme at a very moderate cost.

10. Challenges remained in 2015 with regard to recruitment within the secretariat, as described in the following update:

(a) Two new staff members were recruited (P-3 and P-4 Programme Officers) in 2015, thus closing the first cycle of recruitment for the nine positions initially envisaged for the secretariat;

(b) The three new positions agreed by the Plenary at its third session were to be advertised between October and December 2015. In 2015, the recruitment process took longer than in 2014 owing to an administrative reform at the United Nations Secretariat and implementation of the new enterprise resource planning project, Umoja, which affected the management of finances, resources and assets and resulted in several blackout periods, requiring all staff at the United Nations Office at Nairobi and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to receive training and appropriate access rights to the new system, which took a significant amount of time;

(c) There was a turnover of three staff members, who left the secretariat in February 2015 (P-3 Administrative Officer), July 2015 (P-4 Communications Officer) and October 2015 (G-6 administrative support staff member). Interviews for the P-3 position were conducted in September 2015 and recruitment should be completed prior to the fourth session of the Plenary. One of the remaining two positions was advertised in October 2015 and the other one is expected to be advertised in November 2015;

(d) The secretariat overcame the above challenges in a variety of ways and fulfilled its mandate. The position of Administrative Officer (P-3) was filled thanks to support from staff of the secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals and from finance staff of the UN EP Division of Early Warning and Assessment. Support was also received from seven interns, selected according to UNEP rules, who worked on a voluntary basis to help run several projects, including the two e-conferences. The position of travel assistant (G-5 administrative support staff) was temporarily filled by contracting a consultant based at the UN EP Office for Operations and Corporate Services.

Recruitment of secretariat staff in 2015

<i>Position</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
Head of secretariat (D-1)	In place since February 2014
Programme Officer (P-4)	In place since March 2015
Communications Officer (P-4)	Vacant since July 2015; advertised in November 2015
Programme Officer (P-3)	In place since April 2015
Administrative Officer (P-3)	Vacant since February 2015; interviews completed in September 2015
Associate Knowledge Management Officer (P-2)	Currently filled by a temporary staff; interviews completed in November 2015
Associate Programme Officer (P-2)*	Vacant; to be advertised in November 2015
Administrative support staff (G-6)	Vacant since October 2015; advertised in October 2015
Administrative support staff (G-6)*	Vacant; to be advertised in December 2015
Administrative support staff (G-5)	In place since July 2013
Administrative support staff (G-5)	In place since July 2014
Administrative support staff (G-5)*	Vacant; advertised in October 2015; interviews taking place in December 2015

* Indicates the positions agreed by the Plenary at its third session.