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INFORMATION NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Outcome of the Eight Session of the Plenary of the Intergovernmental
Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
(IPBES-8) (virtual, 14-24 June 2021)
- Report by the Presidency and the Commission

Delegations will find in the Annex, for information, a report by the former PT Presidency and the Commission on the outcome of the abovementioned meeting.

**Outcome of the Eighth plenary session of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on
Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES 8)
(14-24 June 2021, virtual)**

- Report by the Presidency and the Commission -

The eighth session of the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES 8) took place from 14 to 24 of June 2021 in a virtual format with 100 governments and almost 900 registered participants.

The meeting was preceded by the IPBES Stakeholder Days, from 3-9 June 2021 and by regional consultations that occurred from 3 to 9 June 2021, with the 8 of June dedicated to the regions of Europe, Central Asia and Africa.

Most of the 23 EU Member States that are members of IPBES participated in IPBES 8, as well as the European Union in its capacity of an enhanced observer and Poland as an observer.

To support and facilitate the European Union and its Members States' participation in IPBES 8, the Portuguese Presidency organized a group via a multiplatform messaging app, daily EU debriefing meetings, an EU Consultation Meeting on 14 June and an EU Coordination meeting on 23 June.

The main goals of IPBES 8 Plenary included the:

- Approval of the scoping report of a thematic assessment of the interlinkages among biodiversity, water, food and health (nexus assessment);
- Approval of the scoping report of a thematic assessment of the underlying causes of biodiversity loss, determinants of transformative change, and options for achieving the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity (transformative change assessment);

- Final approval of the interim work plans of the five IPBES task forces for the intersessional period 2021-2022;
- Debate of the workshop reports connecting biodiversity and climate change, and biodiversity and pandemics;
- Approval of the reports on the financial and budgetary arrangements (expenditures in 2018, 2019 and 2020; revised budget for 2021; the budget for 2022 and provisional budget for 2023).

Portugal delivered opening and closing statements on behalf of the European Union Member States that are members of IPBES, and the European Union in its capacity of an enhanced observer to the Platform. Those statements acknowledge the outstanding relevance of all IPBES deliverables in providing the knowledge base for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity; highlighted the quality and relevance of the work undertaken for the scoping report for the nexus assessment and the scoping report for the transformative change assessment; welcomed efforts to strengthen collaboration with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the publication of the report of the IPBES and IPCC co-sponsored expert workshop as well as the report of the expert workshop on biodiversity and pandemics.

The key outcomes of IPBES 8 are:

Agenda item 5: Report of the Executive Secretary on progress in the implementation of the rolling work programme up to 2030

The Plenary welcomed the report on the progress of implementation of the rolling work programme up to 2030 and acknowledged with appreciation the outstanding contribution made by the experts involved in the implementation of the work programme.

The importance of the work of the rolling work programme on the thematic assessment of invasive alien species, the thematic assessment of the sustainable use of wild species, and the methodological assessment regarding the diverse conceptualization of multiple values of nature and its benefits was highlighted.

The Plenary expressed its appreciation for the efforts of the secretariat and the experts to maintain the momentum of the rolling work programme during the difficult circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was also expressed that lessons learned from recent experiences of holding online meetings could contribute to improving the effectiveness of the Platform and that the use of online tools should be explored, taking into account the advantages and disadvantages observed.

The Plenary also welcomed the timely response of the secretariat in organizing virtual workshops on biodiversity and pandemics and on biodiversity and climate change.

It was stated that greater efforts should be made to ensure that vacant posts in the secretariat were filled in order to ensure the full implementation of the rolling work programme.

The Plenary also underlined the need to further explore the interlinkages between the Platform and other forums, especially the Convention on Biological Diversity, to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

There was a call for greater focus on the marine environment, including for capacity building.

Agenda item 6: Financial and budgetary arrangements for the Platform

At the Plenary of 14 June 2021 Agenda Item 6 on financial and budgetary arrangements (IPBES/8/5 and INF.24) was introduced. The Executive Secretary pointed out that although all planned activities have been completed within budget since IPBES-7, future budgets will have to take into account that five assessments will be underway. Savings achieved in 2020-21 during the COVID-19 pandemic were due to meetings being held online, and shifting meetings to later dates.

The Contact Group, which met on 15, 16, 18 and 23 June 2021, held discussions on cash and in-kind contributions. It took note of the projections, and deliberated on a revised budget for 2021, a proposed budget for 2022, and a provisional budget for 2023.

During the ensuing discussion some members recommended that lessons learned from working virtually should be assessed and reported to the Plenary at IPBES-9, with a view to realizing more efficient ways of working in the future, such as through making use of both virtual and in-person meetings. It was also pointed out that this review should take into account equitable access and in particular connectivity issues.

The EU successfully requested the addition of one table to the budgetary decision, providing examples of activities catalyzed by IPBES.

Following references from the plenary to the relative small staff of the Executive Secretary to undergo the heavy work programme in the coming years, two proposals from the Bureau regarding additional staff were approved.

New guidelines on contributions to IPBES from the private sector were approved, to ensure that donations could not orient the work of the platform. Delegates asked for a more precise terminology, changes in acknowledgement and visibility of private donors in particular on the IPBES website and the recalling of financial rules of IPBES.

Adopted in the Plenary on 24 June 2021, decision IPBES/8/L.5: a) invites pledges and contributions to the trust fund of the Platform; b) requests the Secretariat to increase efforts to encourage members of the Platform to pledge and contribute to the trust fund and to report back at IPBES-9; c) adopts the revised budgets for 2021 and 2022, amounting to USD 5,674,428 and USD 9,882,675, respectively; d) adopts the provisional budget for 2023, amounting to USD 9,860,670; e) requests the Secretariat to review lessons learned from online meetings and other online working practices; f) decides that neither logos nor names of private-sector or non-governmental stakeholder donors may appear on IPBES reports; that all donors will be listed in the budget report; and that all donors providing financial contributions can be listed on the website of the Platform, subject to approval by the Bureau.

Agenda item 7: Assessing knowledge:

(a) Scoping report for a thematic assessment of the interlinkages among biodiversity, water, food and health;

On 14 June 2021 the scoping report on the nexus assessment (IPBES/8/3 and INF/4) was presented. A working group was formed to address this scoping report and met throughout the session.

The authors of the scoping report found during their work that climate and energy are essential elements of the biodiversity, water, food and health nexus. Some members reiterated that energy is a fundamental aspect of the nexus, including consumption, transport, and storage. In spite of this, some countries (Brazil and Argentina) opposed the inclusion of climate and energy and references to the Paris Agreement. After a lengthy debate the compromise formulation climate, climate change mitigation and adaptation including relevant aspects of the energy system was included in the text.

Further discussions addressed the title of this assessment, including whether, for instance, it should refer to climate adaptation and mitigation and relevant aspects of the energy system. It was also discussed how to refer to climate change and holistic approaches to different knowledge systems. At the end of a difficult negotiation it was decided to keep the previously agreed title, with the nexus elements introduced in the first paragraph.

References to different knowledge and value systems were highly stressed by some members.

Discussions also addressed concepts and terminology like nature's contributions to people, ecosystem services and One Health approach.

After these lengthy discussions in the working group the Plenary approved (collection of decisions in document IPBES/8/L.2 and the scoping report contained in document IPBES/8/L.6.) the undertaking of a thematic assessment of the interlinkages among biodiversity, water, food, and health, for consideration at IPBES 11.

The assessment will address the interlinkages among biodiversity, climate change, adaptation and mitigation, including relevant aspects of the energy system, water, food, and health, and will consider holistic approaches based on different knowledge systems taking into account the IPBES conceptual framework.

The assessment will highlight thresholds, feedbacks and resilience in nexus linkages, as well as opportunities, synergies and trade-offs between different response options.

Emphasis will be placed on response options that consider these nexus elements and their diverse dimensions, including the limits and safeguards needed to implement those options.

The assessment will include terrestrial, freshwater, and marine systems. It will be global in scope, while highlighting and interpreting regional and sub-regional similarities and differences. The time frame of analyses will cover the past (the last 50 years, the industrial revolution, from around 1500 or as far back as appropriate data or information is available, or as clearly relevant to future response options or to understand current status and trends) and plausible future projections up to 2050.

(b) Scoping report for a thematic assessment of the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and the determinants of transformative change and options for achieving the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity;

At the Plenary of 14 June 2021 Agenda Item 7 (b) on the scoping report for a thematic assessment of the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and the determinants of transformative change and options for achieving the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity (IPBES/8/4 and INF/6) was presented, and discussions continued in the Working Group on 16 and 17 June 2021.

Members stressed, inter alia, the need to ensure maximum complementarity and synergies between the transformative change and nexus assessments due to the existing interlinkages; the importance of this report for strengthening implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework under the CBD and achieving the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity; the need for a clear explanation of what transformative change entails, including tangible examples on how it can be achieved; the importance of linking with work across sectors, including trade and finance, and addressing the underlying drivers of biodiversity loss; and the role of equity and justice in transformative change.

Discussions focused on, among other things, the title of the document; the different worldviews and knowledge systems, including ILK; paragraph 59 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; the timeline and geographic coverage; previously used terminology referring to “ecosystem services embodied in nature’s contributions to people”; referencing the Paris agreement; power imbalances, as well as political, social, and economic inequalities among and within nations; referencing the modification of sectoral frameworks as an approach to address the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss; and the assessment of different dimensions and “transdisciplinary perspectives”.

Finally, agreement on a text was found for the scoping report for a thematic assessment of the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and the determinants of transformative change and options for achieving the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity.

On 24 June 2021, the scoping report for the transformative change assessment, contained in document IPBES/8/L.7, was adopted by the Plenary after members agreed to add a reference to a summary of knowledge gaps and further research needs in the Summary for Policy Makers of the assessment (this applies for the Nexus Assessment as well).

The transformative change assessment will assess the determinants for transformative change, how this occurs, and potential obstacles. The report will be global in scope – while also looking at regions, sub-regions, and countries, and terrestrial, freshwater, and marine ecosystems – and will cover past and future time ranges and time steps of transformative change, as appropriate. It will assess and compare different visions, scenarios, and pathways for a sustainable world, taking into consideration the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity, the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, the visions of IPLCs, and the IPBES conceptual framework. This assessment will explore practical options for concrete actions to foster, accelerate, and maintain transformative change towards visions, scenarios, and pathways for a sustainable world.

The transformative change assessment is expected to be concluded in 2024 and will be considered at IPBES-11.

(c) Work related to the interlinkages between biodiversity and climate change and collaboration with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

This agenda item was introduced during the first Plenary session (14 June) with the presentation of the work on the interlinkages between biodiversity and climate change, highlighting the IPBES-IPCC co-sponsored Workshop Report on Biodiversity and Climate Change and the Workshop Report on Biodiversity and Pandemics.

Negotiations continued on 15 June in a virtual plenary setting.

Many members welcomed the two workshop reports, with some emphasizing that the reports are very timely and of high scientific quality and ought to be considered during the development of the nexus assessment. However, others regretted that governments were not involved at any stage of this process, disregarding the fact that government review has not been foreseen for this deliverable requested by countries at IPBES7. Compromise wording on how to address the reports was found by a Friends of the Chair group during the last day of the Plenary.

A further suggestion of the Secretariat to invite members to provide feedback on the Workshop Reports was debated, without success.

As a final outcome the Plenary additionally: a) requests the Bureau, in consultation with the MEP, to review scoping processes in other bodies; b) decides that a technical paper on biodiversity and climate change is no longer required following the completion of the Expert Workshop Report; c) welcomes the note by the Secretariat on collaboration with the IPCC; d) invites the Chair and the Secretariat to continue exploring approaches for future joint activities between the IPCC and IPBES; and e) requests the Secretariat to invite members to submit suggestions for thematic or methodological issues related to biodiversity and climate change for future collaboration with the IPCC.

Agenda item 8: Building capacity, strengthening knowledge foundations and supporting policy

The background documents were introduced in the first day of Plenary (14 June), stressing the expected outcomes for this agenda item. After a two-day virtual working group (17 and 22 June) with smooth discussion and negotiations, the IPBES Plenary on 24 June concluded this agenda item by welcoming the progress made by the task forces and also by approving the interim work plans for the intersessional period 2021–2022 for the task force on capacity building, knowledge and data, indigenous and local knowledge (ILK), policy tools and methodologies, scenarios and models.

Regarding the task force on capacity building and activities to implement the fellowship programme, members agreed on criteria for nominating early career individuals and selection of up to 12 fellows for each of the nexus and transformative change assessments, and on organizing the fifth meeting of the capacity-building forum. Members also agreed that the specific theme of the meeting will be identified by the task force and agreed to by the Bureau.

On the interim work plan for the task force on knowledge and data, the Co-Chair drew attention to the intent to mobilize all relevant actors at the regional level through networks, explaining that knowledge gaps can be identified from approved assessment. It was also highlighted that the task force supports ongoing assessments, including considerations on data sets and indicators, without developing indicators independently; and provided information on the IPBES data management policy.

On the topic of the work plan for the task force on ILK systems, the process for IPLC representatives' participation was presented and outlined the challenges that come with online dialogues, stating that efforts will continue to develop and enhance participation in IPBES processes. Several suggestions of improvement were presented, and following concerns raised about budgetary consequences, delegates agreed to include amendments to the decision.

Concerning the work plan for the task force on policy tools and methodologies, the Co-Chair presented several changes, such as to focus the work on policy support tools as direct services to policy makers, instead of focusing on internal coherence within IPBES processes only.

Regarding the task force on scenarios and models some members presented their concerns that the nature futures framework requires further refinement, including in-depth discussions outside the task forces and with the scientific community before it could serve as guiding framework for IPBES in scenario building. After a lengthy discussion the working group agreed that the task force will: *further develop the nature futures framework to catalyze the development of the next generation of scenarios for biodiversity; submit the framework's foundations at IPBES-9 for further advice; and report back on further work at IPBES-10, with a view to finalizing the framework.*

Agenda item 9: Improving the effectiveness of the Platform

During the introduction of Agenda Item 9 on improving the effectiveness of the platform in the Plenary of 14 June 2021, the IPBES Chair suggested to the Plenary to only receive a progress report (IPBES/8/8); adopt a procedural decision; and defer further considerations to IPBES-9. This was followed by the introduction of the report on the implementation of the recommendations made by the review panel in the context of the IPBES rolling work programme up to 2030 (IPBES/8/8).

Discussions focused on: a) the importance of ensuring IPBES processes remain inclusive to all stakeholders and that expert panels include representatives of IPLCs and other practitioners; b) the standardization of data platforms for easy access; and c) the development of more accessible formats of reports, especially documents for policymakers.

In decision IPBES/8/L.2, adopted on 21 June 2021, the Plenary: a) welcomes the report on progress in addressing the recommendations of the review panel, and requests the Secretariat to continue to take them into account in the implementation of the rolling work programme; b) requests the Bureau, MEP, and the Secretariat to critically review the process for the nomination and selection of experts, ensuring disciplinary, regional, and gender balance; c) requests the Secretariat to consult the MEP on aspects related to reviewing the effectiveness of the platform, drawing from lessons learned from online meetings, including the implications on the budget, while responding to the need to enable full and effective participation of members, experts, and stakeholders, and to report this to IPBES-9.

Agenda item 10: Organization of the Plenary; dates and venues of future sessions of the Plenary

On this agenda item the Plenary was invited to decide on the dates and venues of its ninth and tenth session, and to provide guidance on the organization of work. As there was no offer to host the ninth session, it was decided that IPBES 9 will be held in 2022 and the Bureau was requested to decide on the specific dates, venue, and modalities, including the possibility of holding the meeting online should circumstances not make an in-person meeting feasible. On the organization of work, the EU and its MS raised some concerns with the extent of matters on the IPBES 9 agenda and stressed that they will discuss and acknowledge the work undertaken by the Task Force on scenarios and models with a focus on the foundations of the nature futures framework (NFF), but will not be in a position to approve the NFF at IPBES 9, requesting this to be reflected in the meeting's report, and noting the future framework should be discussed at IPBES-10. The EU and its MS also suggested including holding preparatory meetings in the modalities of future meetings. However, it was highlighted that it is difficult to determine modalities for future meetings due to current uncertainties.

Members accepted with appreciation the offer of the US Government to hold the IPBES 10 in April/May 2023 in Madison, Wisconsin.
