Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee (GBSC)

Meeting papers

Update on EPBRS and IPBES Development

March 2009

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GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY SUB-COMMITTEE

UPDATE ON EPBRS ACTIVITIES AND IPBES DEVELOPMENT

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European Platform for Biodiversity Research Strategy (EPBRS)[1]

Forward Schedule

Meeting May 19-22, 2009 (Czech Presidency): Biodiversity and Taxonomy. No papers available yet: e-conference likely beforehand (GBSC will be notified). Likely scope: biodiversity data sources and collections, methods to overcome taxonomic impediment (role of LIFEWATCH); information barriers, data sharing, standardisation and compatibility, capacity building (EDIT, GEOSS).

> UK Links: Conclusions from the House of Lords Select Committee on Systematics and Taxonomy call for UK BRAG to undertake two activities: co-ordinate bar-coding effort across the UK, and; explore the options for commissioning the production of new and updated identification guides for the UK fauna and flora. UK BRAG will develop advice to the UK Biodiversity Partnership Standing Committee (UKSC); members are tasked with organizing a workshop to develop that advice.

Meeting September 2009 (Swedish Presidency) - provisional agenda: Science and research needs for biodiversity targets beyond 2010; Emerging issues - biofuels, nanotechnology; EU research strategy, action plan, European science-policy mechanism, scientific assessments.

Key Activities

Outcomes from the November 17-21, 2008 meeting (French Presidency) on Biodiversity and Industry.
> Conclusions available on the EPBRS website[2]: they call for the need to further develop and implement inter-disciplinary research, including methods for:
> - Integrating biodiversity maintenance into business practice and ethics;
> - Assessing impact on biodiversity, valuation, mitigation and compensation;
> - Improving the ability of ecological engineering and ecological restoration to benefit biodiversity and to use ecosystems sustainably;
> - Developing necessary high quality and relevant research.

This is a high level summary, but usefully highlights some detail in requirements and draws attention to the need to respond to *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity* (TEEB[3]) activities.

Biostrat-EPBRS-DIVERSITAS workshop on GEO BON (Sep 2008) concluded need for both a strategy for implementing GEO BON in EU and an analysis of research needs to

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[1] Current UK members of the EPBRS Steering Committee are Andy Swash (Defra) and Allan Watt (CEH)
[2] http://www.epbrs.org/PDF/EPBRS-FR2008-Industry_Final_.pdf
[3] http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/economics/

support EU contribution to GEO BON: currently being developed and will be reported in due course.

Network of Knowledge: an EPBRS contribution to the debate on an IPBES (see below). A concept note has been published recently and is now open for consultation via the EUROBI[4] forum. A workshop is planned for May 2009 to finalise this contribution, which will be presented to the Council Working Party for International Environmental Issues (WPIEI biodiversity) on 2 June 2009. The Commission (DGRes) is laso looking at ways to implement such a network within EU under FP7. Members of GBSC and UK BRAG were asked to identify candidates to attend the May EPBRS workshop.

Inter-governmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

A UNEP Concept Note (June 2008) was discussed at last GBSC meeting (M(08)11, item 8). Defra responded to this note at an intergovernmental meeting in November 2008: a note of that meeting is attached.

A draft decision recommending a further inter-governmental meeting later in the year to consider the IPBES proposal will be discussed at the UNEP Governing Council meeting in Nairobi (16-21 Feb 2009).

Other resources contributing to the debate on IPBES include:

UNEP World Conservation Monitoring centre (UNEP-WCMC) assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the interfaces between biodiversity science and policy. Available as an information document for the upcoming 25th meeting of the UNEP Governing Council (Nairobi, 16th–20th Feb 2009): http://www.unep.org/gc/gc25/info-docs.asp (scroll down to UNEP/GC.25/ INF/30).

French Institut du développement durable et des relations internationales (IDDRI) independent gap analysis report: http://www.iddri.org/Publications/Collections/Idees-pour-le-debat/The-Debate-on-an-Intergovernmental-Science-Policy-Platform-on-Biodiversity-and-Ecosystem-Services

EPBRS *Network of Knowledge* Concept (see above).

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[4] EUROBI (EU Research on biodiversity) is an EPBRS online forum (http://groups.google.com/group/EUROBI/topics)

NOTE OF IPBES *AD HOC* INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONSULTATION MEETING, PUTRAJAYA, 10-12 November 2008

Summary
This was a useful and constructive exchange of views. Most delegations agreed on the need to improve the science-policy interface. Several countries (notably China, Canada) asked for further analysis of institutional gaps, and strengths and weaknesses. Most governments said it was premature to discuss work programme, budgets, governance. Three different visions for the platform were described: an independent, IPCC type assessment panel; a network of networks and subsidiary body of CBD. A strong focus on capacity building was requested by developing countries (led by Brazil). Several offers to host and/or co-sponsor the secretariat were made – UNESCO (France), FAO, UNEP-WCMC, IUCN, Korea, Sweden. The meeting agreed that a report should be presented to the UNEP Governing Council in February, seeking endorsement for a process, including a further intergovernmental meeting with a view to strengthening and improving the science-policy interface.

Participants
The meeting was attended by 77 governments and 27 international organisations (UN bodies, convention secretariats, NGOs). Most key players were present with the exception of India, New Zealand and Russia. Developing countries were well-represented, especially Africa, but only Brazil and Columbia attended from South America (Brazil were unsurprisingly critical of this, but Achim Steiner noted all DC's had been invited to attend, funded by UNEP). Opening presentations were given by Mr Douglas Uggah Embas Environment Minister, Malaysia, Ms Valerie Pecresse, Science Minister, France, Jochen Flasbarth, German Environment Ministry (on behalf of CBD chair), Mr Abdul Hamid Zakri, UN University and Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director. Opening and closing sessions were chaired by the Director of the Malaysian Environment Agency. Vice-chairs (Bob Watson, UK and Alfred Otang-Yboah, Ghana) were nominated by the regions and Bob Watson chaired the main working sessions of the meeting.

Organisation of meeting
The meeting was conducted under UNEP rules and procedures, with participation of governments and NGOs. However is was agreed at the outset that the meeting would be a consultation to be summarised in a chair's report, rather than a negotiated declaration. The meeting was therefore held in plenary with no contact groups. The papers prepared by the UNEP Secretariat were discussed in turn. In the final session the chair's report and its recommendations were reviewed. The chairs sought to agree three recommendations from the meeting, however without scope for negotiation, no consensus was reached on these and they were eventually presented as chair's recommendations.

Chair's report - key points
- broad recognition that there is a need to improve the science-policy interface which should use existing relevant assessments and the best available multidisciplinary knowledge.
- need for a gap analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the existing interfaces and coordination among them at all spatial scales (draft TOR's discussed in the meeting).
- delegations had differing views as to which gaps in the science-policy interface were most significant, with some countries (US, EU, Mexico) noting the lack of an effective assessment process that provides policy-relevant information and advice to multiple biodiversity-related conventions, while most developing country delegates viewing the greatest gap being capacity-building (Brazil, Tanzania, Grenada, Haiti, Algeria).
- many delegates supported that the proposal that the platform be independent but linked to an existing organization or organizations (e.g. UNEP with other UN organizations such as UNESCO). They also expressed (inc the representatives of CBD, CITES, Ramsar, GBIF among others) that the platform should serve a range of stakeholders including multiple biodiversity-related conventions.
- there were some countries (primarily Brazil) that supported the platform being a subsidiary body to the SBSTTA of the CBD, limiting scope solely to CBD.
- there was broad agreement that the discussion on the detailed programme of work and budget, governance and legal status was premature.

- on specific functions of the platform, many delegates agreed the role of a science policy platform should be to
  I.   compile, assess and synthesize existing scientific knowledge, thereby indentifying areas of science requiring further development
  II. provide policy relevant (not policy-prescriptive) information to multiple stakeholders including multilateral environmental agreements without being policy prescriptive

- there was broad agreement that the platform should include strengthening capacity in developing countries with respect to assessing and using knowledge but dispute over whether it should be a separate activity or incorporated into other activities
- likewise, some countries suggested that the early warning and lessons activity was an important activity in its own right, while others suggested that it could be integrated into the assessment processes.

Draft Recommendations

The Chair recommends:
1. to continue to explore mechanisms to improve the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for human well-being and sustainable development. Such mechanisms could include components of early warning, multiple scale assessments, policy information and capacity development.

2. that a preliminary gap analysis be undertaken for the purpose of facilitating the ongoing discussions on how to strengthen the science-policy interface, and that a report be made available as an information document at the at 25th Session of the GC/GMEF that would later be reviewed and further refined.

3. that the Executive Director of UNEP reports to the 25th Session of the GC/GMEF on the outcome of the present meeting, and the GC requests the ED to convene a second Intergovernmental Multi-stakeholder Meeting on an Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services with the view to strengthening and improving the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for human well-being, including consideration of a new science-policy platform.

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20th November 2008