



THE IPBES  
**MANUAL FOR NATIONAL  
FOCAL POINTS**



## THE IPBES MANUAL FOR NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 PURPOSE AND OUTLINE OF THIS MANUAL

Established in 2012, IPBES has over the years established a number of processes and procedures and its practices are constantly evolving. At the same time, the success of IPBES depends entirely on the engagement and support of Governments, experts and other stakeholders. The present manual is intended as a resource for national focal points, explains the structure and functioning of IPBES and shows the main ways to engage in its work.

### 1.2 DEFINITION OF IPBES NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS

There are many aspects and processes of the IPBES work programme, to which Governments are invited to contribute. Examples include the nomination of experts to participate in the preparation of assessments and the review of their drafts, as well as the work of the IPBES task forces.

To enable this further engagement by Governments with the work of IPBES, and to facilitate communication between IPBES and its members, each member is invited to designate a single national focal point. This national focal point should ensure coordination of the engagement with IPBES across Government departments and ministries and can further support the work of IPBES by engaging with relevant national stakeholders, including academia and other organizations at the science-policy interface.

The form to be used for designating a national focal point and further information on the process is available online here: <https://ipbes.net/national-focal-points>

# CHAPTER 2

## OVERVIEW OF IPBES

### 2.1 OBJECTIVE AND STATUS

IPBES is an independent intergovernmental body established by States to strengthen the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development. It was established in Panama City, on 21 April 2012 by 94 Governments. The founding resolution is available here:

[https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/downloads/UNEP\\_IPBES\\_MI\\_2\\_9\\_EN\\_0.pdf](https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/downloads/UNEP_IPBES_MI_2_9_EN_0.pdf)

IPBES is not a United Nations body. However, at the request of the IPBES Plenary and with the authorization of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 2013, UNEP provides secretariat services to IPBES.

### 2.2 MEMBERSHIP

Membership of IPBES is open to States Members of the United Nations, who may become members by expressing their intent to be members of IPBES. In practice, the intent to become a member of IPBES should be communicated to the IPBES secretariat by way of a formal letter, issued by or on behalf of the Head of State or Government or Minister for Foreign Affairs, consistent with national policies and law. This letter should also designate and provide official contact details for a national focal point.

All contributions to the IPBES trust fund are voluntary.

Further information on IPBES membership is available at: <https://ipbes.net/members-observers>

### 2.3 FUNCTIONS

IPBES has four **functions**, which are:

(a) To identify and prioritize key scientific information needed for policymakers at appropriate scales and

to catalyse efforts to generate new knowledge by engaging in dialogue with key scientific organizations, policymakers and funding organizations, but not to directly undertake new research;

- (b) To perform regular and timely assessments of knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystem services and their interlinkages, which should include comprehensive global, regional and, as necessary, subregional assessments and thematic issues at appropriate scales and new topics identified by science and as decided upon by the Plenary;
- (c) To support policy formulation and implementation by identifying policy-relevant tools and methodologies, such as those arising from assessments, to enable decision makers to gain access to those tools and methodologies and, where necessary, to promote and catalyse their further development;
- (d) To prioritize key capacity-building needs to improve the science-policy interface at appropriate levels and then provide and call for financial and other support for the highest-priority needs related directly to its activities, as decided by the Plenary, and to catalyse financing for such capacity building activities by providing a forum with conventional and potential sources of funding.

### 2.4 OPERATING PRINCIPLES

In carrying out its work IPBES is guided by the following **operating principles**:

- Collaborate with existing initiatives on biodiversity and ecosystem services, including multilateral environmental agreements, United Nations bodies and networks of scientists and knowledge holders, to fill gaps and build upon their work while avoiding duplication;
- Be scientifically independent and ensure credibility, relevance and legitimacy through peer review of its work and transparency in its decision-making processes;
- Use clear, transparent and scientifically credible processes for the exchange, sharing and use of data, information and technologies from all relevant sources, including non-peer-reviewed literature, as appropriate;

- Recognize and respect the contribution of indigenous and local knowledge to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems;
- Provide policy-relevant information, but not policy-prescriptive advice, mindful of the respective mandates of the multilateral environmental agreements;
- Integrate capacity-building into all relevant aspects of its work according to priorities decided by the Plenary;
- Recognize the unique biodiversity and scientific knowledge thereof within and among regions and the need for the full and effective participation of developing countries and balanced regional representation and participation in its structure and work;
- Take an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach;
- Recognize the need for gender equity in all relevant aspects of its work;
- Address terrestrial, marine and inland water biodiversity and ecosystem services and their interactions;
- Ensure the full use of national, subregional and regional assessments and knowledge, as appropriate, including by ensuring a bottom-up approach.
- The efficiency and effectiveness of IPBES are independently reviewed and evaluated on a periodic basis as decided by the Plenary, with adjustments to be made as necessary.

## 2.5 INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

### 2.5.1 The Plenary

The Plenary is the decision-making body of IPBES. It comprises all members of IPBES.

The Plenary meets approximately every 14 months. Sessions of the Plenary have thus far included:

- IPBES 1:** 20-25 January 2013, Bonn, Germany
- IPBES 2:** 8-13 December 2013, Antalya, Turkey
- IPBES 3:** 11-16 January 2015, Bonn, Germany
- IPBES 4:** 21-27 February 2016, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- IPBES 5:** 6-11 March 2017, Bonn, Germany
- IPBES 6:** 17-24 March 2018, Medellin, Colombia
- IPBES 7:** 29 April – 4 May 2019, Paris, France
- IPBES 8:** 14 – 24 June 2021, online

Among the primary **functions of the Plenary** are:

- Electing the Chair and Vice-Chairs of IPBES as well as the other five officers of the IPBES Bureau and the 25 members of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel;
- Responding to requests from Governments and multilateral environmental agreements related to

- biodiversity and ecosystem services on scientific and technical matters that require the attention and action of IPBES; welcoming inputs and suggestions from United Nations bodies related to biodiversity and ecosystem services as determined by their respective governing bodies; and encouraging and taking into account, as appropriate, inputs and suggestions made by relevant stakeholders, such as other intergovernmental organizations, international and regional scientific organizations, environmental trust funds, non-governmental organizations, indigenous peoples and local communities and the private sector. By way of example: the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the European Union and a number of organizations requested IPBES to undertake an assessment to address issues at the nexus of biodiversity, food and water, agriculture and health, nutrition and food security, forestry and fisheries to form part of the second work programme of IPBES;
- Adopting a work programme for IPBES;
  - Establishing subsidiary bodies and working groups, as appropriate;
  - Approving a budget and overseeing the allocation of the trust fund;
  - Defining the scope of assessment reports and approving / accepting final assessment reports;
  - Reviewing the efficiency and effectiveness of IPBES on a periodic basis;
  - Adopting and amending rules of procedure and financial rules;
  - Ensuring the active and efficient participation of civil society in the Plenary.

In addition to the members of IPBES, observers can also be represented at sessions of the Plenary. Observers can be: any State not a member of IPBES and any body, organization or agency, whether national or international, governmental, intergovernmental, or non-governmental, including organizations of and representatives of indigenous peoples and local communities, which is qualified in matters covered by IPBES, and which has informed the IPBES secretariat of its wish to be represented at sessions of the Plenary. Observers may, upon the invitation of the Chair, participate in the Plenary without the ability to cast votes or join or block consensus.

While a policy and procedures on the admission of observers is still under consideration by the Plenary, an interim procedure has been applied for each session of the Plenary which foresees:

- The observers represented at previous sessions of the Plenary are admitted to the next and do not need to resubmit their requests for admission; all observers represented at previous sessions of the Plenary are listed here: <https://ipbes.net/accredited-organisations>

- For new observers:
  - Any body or organization, which is qualified in matters covered by IPBES, should inform the secretariat of its wish to be represented at the next session of the Plenary; in practice this is done through the online registration form provided in the notification with the invitation for a session of the Plenary;
  - The Bureau reviews the list of those who expressed their wish to be represented;
  - The Bureau makes recommendations on the admission of new observers to the Plenary and communicates those recommendations to members of IPBES at least eight weeks before the opening of the session of the Plenary;
  - Any member of IPBES may communicate its view on the recommendations of the Bureau, which should be received by the Bureau at least two weeks before the opening of the session of the Plenary;
  - If there are concerns among some members of IPBES regarding the request by a body or organization for its admission to be observer of the Plenary, the Bureau will inform the body or organization of such concerns;
  - At the session of the Plenary concerned, a member of IPBES may reject the admission of a body or an organization to be an observer of the Plenary, and such rejection will stand unless overruled by two-thirds majority of the members of IPBES present and voting.

In 2017, the IPBES Plenary decided to allow the enhanced participation of the European Union, in its capacity as observer, in the sessions of the Plenary. This enhanced participation as observer includes the right to speak in turn; the right to reply; the right to introduce proposals; the right to provide views; and the ability to support the implementation of the work programme of IPBES through financial support, among other means; but does not grant the ability to vote or to be elected to the Bureau of IPBES.

## 2.5.2 The Bureau

The Bureau is a subsidiary body of the Plenary, established to support the smooth, effective and timely operation of IPBES. The Bureau oversees **administrative functions**, including:

- Addressing requests related to the IPBES programme of work and products that require attention by IPBES between sessions of the Plenary;
- Overseeing communication and outreach activities;
- Reviewing progress in the implementation of decisions of the Plenary, if so directed by the Plenary;
- Monitoring the performance of the secretariat;
- Organizing and helping to conduct the sessions of the Plenary;
- Reviewing the observance of the Platform's rules and procedures;
- Reviewing the management of resources and observance of financial rules and reporting thereon to the Plenary;
- Advising the Plenary on coordination between the Platform and other relevant institutions;
- Identifying donors and developing partnership arrangements for the implementation of the Platform's activities.

The Bureau consists of the Chair of IPBES, four Vice-Chairs, and five other officers, elected from among the members of the Platform. Each UN region (African Group; Asia-Pacific Group; Eastern European Group; Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC); and Western European and Others Group (WEOG)) is represented by two officers in the Bureau.

The term of office of a Bureau member is 3 years. Members can be re-elected for one consecutive term. The Chair is rotated among the five UN regions every 3 years without the possibility of re-election as Chair.

Elections for the IPBES Bureau were held at IPBES 1, IPBES 4 and IPBES 7.

The Chairs of IPBES have been/are:

- Tan Sri Zakri Abdul Hamid, Malaysia (2013-2016)
- Sir Robert Watson, United Kingdom (2016-2019)
- Ana María Hernández Salgar, Colombia (2019-2023)

Information on the current members of the Bureau is available at: <https://ipbes.net/bureau>

## 2.5.3 The Multidisciplinary Expert Panel

The Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) is also a subsidiary body of the Plenary, established to support the smooth, effective and timely operation of IPBES. The Multidisciplinary Expert Panel carries out **scientific and technical functions**, including:

- Providing advice to the Plenary on scientific and technical aspects of the IPBES programme of work;
- Providing advice and assistance on technical and/or scientific communication matters;
- Managing the IPBES peer-review process to ensure the highest levels of scientific quality, independence and credibility for all products delivered by IPBES at all stages of the process;
- Engaging the scientific community and other knowledge holders with the work programme, taking into account the need for different disciplines and types of knowledge, gender balance, and effective contribution and participation by experts from developing countries;

- Assuring scientific and technical coordination among structures set up under IPBES and facilitating coordination between IPBES and other related processes to build upon existing efforts;
- Exploring ways and means to bring different knowledge systems, including indigenous knowledge systems, into the science-policy interface.

The MEP consists of 25 members, with five members nominated by each of the five UN regions. The term of office of a MEP member is 3 years. Members can be re-elected for one consecutive term. The members of the MEP are elected for their personal expertise and are not intended to represent any particular region.

An interim MEP was elected at IPBES 1. Elections for the MEP were held at IPBES 3 and IPBES 6.

The Chair or Co-Chairs of the MEP are elected by the members of the MEP and the MEP rotates the position of the Chair(s) among the range of its members at regular intervals.

Co-Chairs of the MEP/interim MEP have included/are:

- Carlos Joly, Brazil and Mark Lonsdale, Australia (interim MEP, 2013-2015)
- Sebsebe Demissew, Ethiopia and Marie Stenseke, Sweden (2015-2018)
- Marie Stenseke, Sweden and Luthando Dziba, South Africa (2018-2022)

Information on the current members of the MEP is available at: <https://ipbes.net/multidisciplinary-expert-panel>

## 2.5.4 Task forces and expert groups

There are a number of other IPBES bodies, which support the implementation of the IPBES work programme:

- Expert groups: When the Plenary approves the preparation of an assessment on a specific topic, the MEP selects a group of experts to prepare the assessment. The number of experts selected varies depending on the scope of the assessment. These assessment expert groups are established for the duration of the assessment, i.e. normally about 2-4 years;
- Task forces: The Plenary established five task forces to support the implementation of specific elements of the IPBES work programme:
  - A task force on capacity-building (established at IPBES2 to support the implementation of the first IPBES work programme; mandate extended at IPBES7 to support the IPBES work programme up to 2030);
  - A task force on indigenous and local knowledge (established at IPBES 2; mandate extended at IPBES 7);

- A task force on knowledge and data (established at IPBES 2; mandate extended at IPBES 7);
- A task force on policy tools and methodologies (established at IPBES 7);
- A task force on scenarios and models (established at IPBES 7).

The Plenary adopted specific terms of reference for each of the task forces. The members of the task forces are selected by the MEP and Bureau, based on nominations by Governments and stakeholders. Except for the task force on scenarios and models, which comprises 24 members, all task forces comprise 14 members. Their term of office is about three years; ending at the third session of the Plenary following their selection. Task force members can be re-selected.

## 2.5.5 Stakeholders

IPBES works to engage diverse stakeholders with its work and in its processes. Stakeholders are both contributors to and end users of IPBES's work and include individual scientists and knowledge holders as well as institutions, organizations and groups working in the field of biodiversity and ecosystems services that can:

- Contribute to the activities of the IPBES work programme through their experience, expertise, knowledge, data, information and capacity-building experience;
- Use or benefit from the outcomes of the work programme;
- Encourage and support the participation of scientists and knowledge holders in the work of the Platform.

It is important to note that IPBES members – and national focal points as the representatives of members – are not regarded by IPBES as stakeholders, given their status as the primary constituents of the Platform.

IPBES has a dedicated strategy for the engagement of stakeholders, available here: [https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/downloads/Decision\\_IPBES\\_3\\_4\\_EN\\_0.pdf](https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/downloads/Decision_IPBES_3_4_EN_0.pdf)

Examples of activities include the organization of “Stakeholder Days” ahead of IPBES Plenary sessions and webinars for stakeholders during the external review of draft IPBES products.

The IPBES secretariat has developed a registry of IPBES stakeholders to maintain an updated list of current contact information, to enable the secretariat to directly share breaking news, announcements, calls and other important IPBES information. Individuals or organisations who wish to be included in the registry of stakeholders are asked to fill in the form at: <https://ipbes.net/stakeholder-registry>

IPBES also engages with stakeholders through self-organized stakeholder networks of IPBES. As of May 2021, there are two such networks, the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and the Open-ended Network of IPBES Stakeholders. Information on the networks and how to join them is available at: <https://ipbes.net/networks>

## 2.6 WORK PROGRAMME

In order to advance the achievement of the objective of IPBES and to perform its four functions, and guided by the operating principles, the Plenary periodically adopts a work programme for IPBES.

The first work programme for IPBES, 2014-2018, was adopted at IPBES 2 in 2013 and concluded with the approval of the Global Assessment of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services at IPBES 7 in 2019. Further information on the first work programme of IPBES is available at: <https://ipbes.net/first-work-programme>

At IPBES 7, the Plenary adopted the IPBES work programme up to 2030.

The policy framework for the 2030 work programme aligns with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as with the work of the biodiversity-related conventions and other biodiversity and ecosystem service processes.

The 2030 work programme is entirely demand-driven, based on requests received from relevant bodies under multilateral environmental agreements and Governments, as well as inputs and suggestions received from other stakeholders. It is expected to inform all stakeholders in the implementation of their activities to support the achievement of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity, as well as other work under multilateral environmental agreements related to biodiversity. The work programme may also inform the implementation of the Paris Agreement with respect to matters related to the links between biodiversity and climate change.

The 2030 work programme initially focuses on three topics:

- Understanding the importance of biodiversity in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- Understanding the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and determinants of transformative change and options for achieving the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity;
- Measuring business impact and dependence on biodiversity and nature's contributions to people.

The 2030 work programme includes six objectives, with one objective related to each of the four functions of IPBES, one to communications and engagement of Governments and stakeholders and one to the review of the effectiveness of IPBES:

- **Objective 1: Assessing knowledge:** To assess the state of knowledge on biodiversity and nature's contributions to people in support of sustainable development. Initial deliverables:
  - A thematic assessment of the interlinkages among biodiversity, water, food and health in the context of climate change ("nexus assessment");
  - 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 ("transformative change assessment");
  - A methodological assessment of the impact and dependence of business on biodiversity and nature's contributions to people ("business and biodiversity assessment").
- **Objective 2: Building capacity:** To build capacities of individuals and institutions for a strengthened science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services, including:
  - Enhanced learning and engagement;
  - Facilitated access to expertise and information;
  - Strengthened national and regional capacities
- **Objective 3: Strengthening the knowledge foundations:** To promote the generation of knowledge and management of data on biodiversity and ecosystem services as a foundation for the work of IPBES, including:
  - Advanced work on knowledge and data;
  - Enhanced recognition of and work with indigenous and local knowledge systems
- **Objective 4: Supporting policy:** To identify and promote the development and use of policy instruments, policy support tools and methodologies in the field of biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, including:
  - Advanced work on policy instruments, policy support tools and methodologies;
  - Advanced work on scenarios and models of biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services;
  - Advanced work on multiple values.
- **Objective 5: Communicating and engaging:** To strengthen the involvement of members and stakeholders and to increase the visibility of IPBES and the use of IPBES products, including:
  - Strengthened communication;
  - Strengthened engagement of Governments;
  - Strengthened engagement of stakeholders.

- Objective 6: Improving the effectiveness of IPBES:**  
 To ensure the regular internal and external review of the effectiveness of IPBES, including:
  - Periodic review of the effectiveness of IPBES;
  - Review of the IPBES conceptual framework;
  - Improving the effectiveness of the assessment process.

into account different approaches, and visions. They involve analyzing, synthesizing and critically judging available information. They can be of the following types:

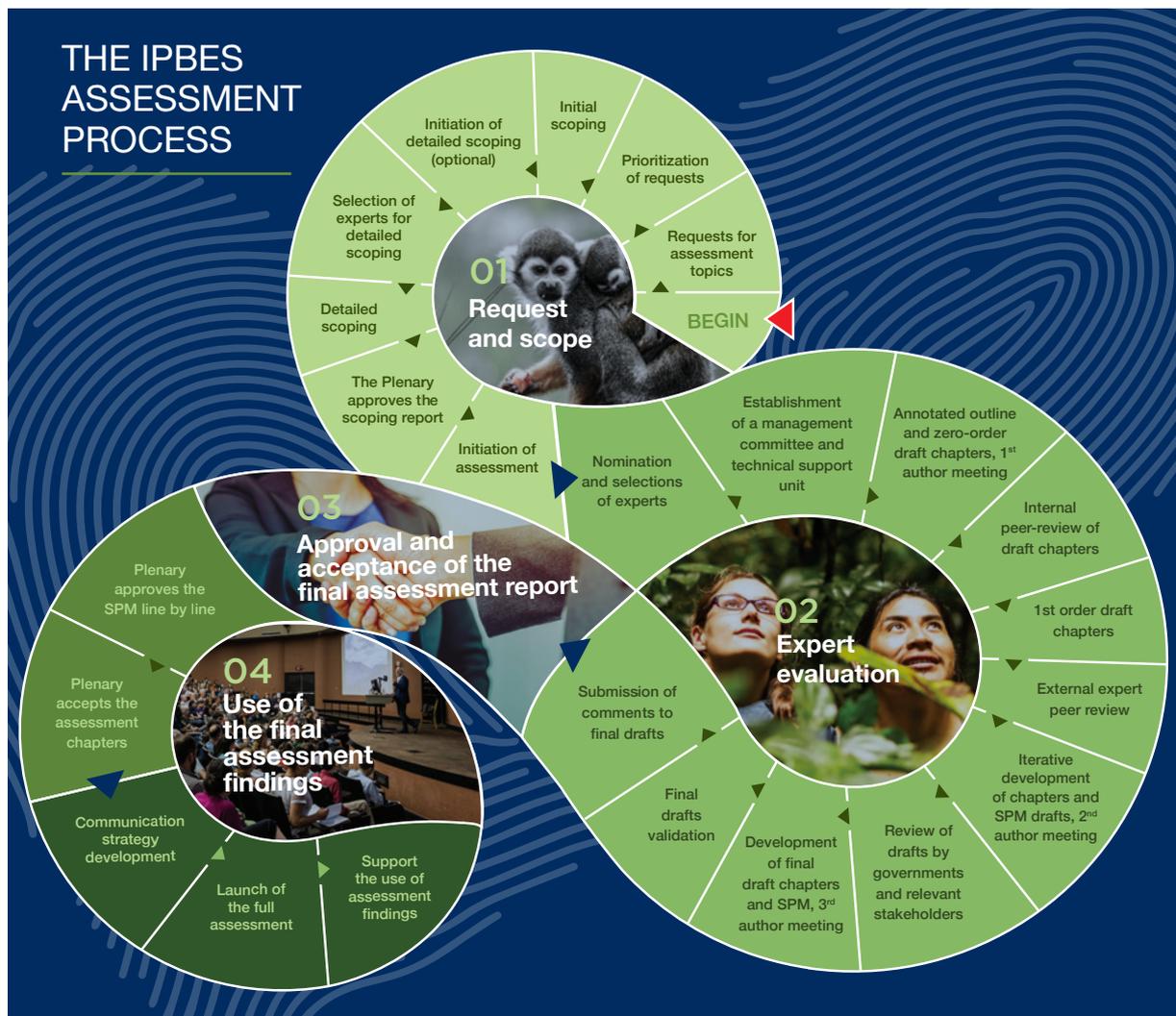
- Global assessments of biodiversity and ecosystem services;
- Regional and subregional assessments of biodiversity and ecosystem services with a defined geographical scope; and
- Thematic or methodological assessments based on a standard or a fast-track approach.

## 2.7 IPBES PRODUCTS AND ACTIVITIES

IPBES produces assessment reports, which are critical evaluations of existing knowledge (e.g. peer-reviewed scientific literature, grey literature and other forms of knowledge including indigenous and local knowledge) on scientific, technical and socioeconomic issues that take

Assessment reports are comprised of a summary for policymakers and individual chapters and their executive summaries.

The process of preparing an IPBES assessment is made up of a number of steps:



IPBES also conducts workshops in support of the preparation of assessments. The workshop reports feed into one or more assessments and are not approved by the

Plenary. They include a prominent disclaimer that they have not been reviewed or approved by the Plenary.

For further information on completed and ongoing IPBES assessments, please visit: <https://ipbes.net/assessing-knowledge>

Other IPBES products and activities, including the work of task forces, are closely interlinked with the assessment process. They include:

- Activities to implement the approach to addressing and working with indigenous and local knowledge in IPBES, including “calls for contributions” where indigenous and local knowledge holders and experts on indigenous and local knowledge are invited to point assessment authors to relevant resources related to indigenous and local knowledge; dialogue workshops with experts on indigenous and local knowledge, for example in the context of the review of assessment drafts; and activities to disseminate IPBES assessments to indigenous peoples and local communities. For more information, see here: <https://ipbes.net/indigenous-local-knowledge-ipbes>
- Capacity-building activities to familiarize experts selected to prepare IPBES assessments with the processes and procedures of IPBES; to support IPBES national focal points, for example in reviewing drafts of IPBES assessments; and the IPBES fellowship programme, which allows early-career researchers to participate in the work of IPBES. For more information, see here: <https://ipbes.net/o2-building-capacity>
- Support to assessment experts in identifying and facilitating access to existing knowledge, information and data, including indicators and metrics for use in IPBES assessments and management of information and data; and catalyzation of the generation of new knowledge based on knowledge and data gaps identified in IPBES assessments. For more information, see here: <https://ipbes.net/knowledge-data>
- Support to assessment experts regarding the use of policy instruments, policy support tools and methodologies and support to the uptake of the messages and policy options of completed IPBES assessments in decision-making. For more information, see here: <https://ipbes.net/policy-tools-methodologies>
- Support to assessment experts regarding the use of existing scenarios and models, and catalyzation of the development of new scenarios and associated models for the future work of IPBES and the application in policy development. For more information, see here: <https://ipbes.net/scenarios-models>

The procedures for the development of IPBES deliverables are available here: [https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/downloads/pdf/IPBES\\_Procedures\\_for\\_the\\_preparation\\_of\\_deliverables\\_consolidated.pdf](https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/downloads/pdf/IPBES_Procedures_for_the_preparation_of_deliverables_consolidated.pdf)

## 2.8 FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY ARRANGEMENTS

IPBES is financed solely through voluntary contributions.

The Plenary, at each of its sessions, approves a budget for two consecutive calendar years. The secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau, prepares the draft budget for consideration by the Plenary. In practice, this includes proposed adjustments to current approved budgets, if required, and a budget for the subsequent year for approval by Plenary.

The IPBES Trust Fund is open to voluntary contributions from all sources, including Governments, United Nations bodies, the Global Environment Facility, other intergovernmental organizations and other stakeholders, such as the private sector and foundations. The amount of contributions from private sources may not exceed the amount of contributions from public sources in any biennium.

The majority of financial contributions to IPBES come from its members and the European Union. Since 2018, IPBES has also started to receive funding from the private sector.

Financial contributions cannot orient the work of IPBES, be earmarked for specific activities nor may they be given anonymously. They also need to be consistent with the functions, operating principles and institutional arrangements of IPBES. As an exception from these principles, financial contributions earmarked for a specific activity that do not exceed 300,000 USD per contributor can be approved by the Bureau; earmarked financial contributions exceeding 300,000 USD can be approved by the Plenary.

Any entity intending to contribute to the IPBES trust fund may announce its pledge at a session of the Plenary of IPBES. A written confirmation of the pledge on official letterhead and signed by a duly authorized official should be sent to the secretariat, indicating payment timelines and instalments. The secretariat should also be informed of each contribution sent to the trust fund. For further guidance on how to make contributions to IPBES, donors are encouraged to contact the secretariat.

The financial procedures for IPBES are available here: [https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/downloads/IPBES\\_financial\\_procedures.pdf](https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/downloads/IPBES_financial_procedures.pdf)

They govern the financial administration of IPBES and the secretariat. They are applied in compliance with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the UN and UNEP.

# CHAPTER 3

## ROLES OF IPBES NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS

### 3.1 BEING INFORMED

There are many ways to stay up-to-date on IPBES activities and opportunities for engagement:

- Official communications of IPBES are contained in **notifications** from the IPBES secretariat
  - The notifications are published on the IPBES website at: <https://ipbes.net/notifications>
  - To receive the notifications via email, please create an account on the IPBES website and register for the IPBES mailing list: <https://ipbes.net/user/register>
  - Designated national focal points receive additional communications from the secretariat
- The IPBES **website** includes information on the structure of IPBES, its work programme, task forces and expert groups and all IPBES activities. Check the calendar regularly for the most recent updates: <https://ipbes.net/events>
- IPBES is very active on **social media**. Please follow IPBES:
  - The IPBES YouTube channel with videos about IPBES assessments and activities: <https://www.youtube.com/user/ipbeschannel>
  - IPBES on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/IPBES/>
  - IPBES on Twitter, with more than 50,000 followers: <https://twitter.com/IPBES>
  - IPBES on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/ipbes>
  - IPBES on Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/ipbes/>
- IPBES national focal points are welcome to liaise with their respective regional Bureau members, in addition to the IPBES secretariat. The members of the Bureau are listed here: <https://ipbes.net/bureau>
- The IPBES database of experts, including members of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and assessment experts, is available at: <https://ipbes.net/experts>. National focal points can refer to this database to identify experts from their country or region, for example as invitees for uptake events.

### 3.2 SUBMITTING REQUESTS

#### 3.2.1 Process for the submission of requests (for assessments and other work programme elements) to IPBES

The IPBES work programme, which frames all activities of IPBES, responds to requests from Governments and multilateral environmental agreements. A request can consist, for example, of proposing a priority topic for a future IPBES assessment.

Governments and multilateral environmental agreements can send requests to IPBES on scientific and technical matters that require the attention and action of IPBES. United Nations bodies related to biodiversity and ecosystem services and relevant stakeholders, such as other intergovernmental organizations, international and regional scientific organizations, environment trust funds, non-governmental organizations, indigenous peoples and local communities and the private sector can submit “inputs and suggestions”.

The first two calls for requests, inputs and suggestions were issued following IPBES 1 (in 2013) and following IPBES 6 (in 2018). They served as the basis for the development of the first (2014-2018) IPBES work programme and the IPBES work programme up to 2030 (2019-2030). An additional call is expected in 2022, following IPBES 9, to complement the 2030 rolling work programme.

The calls provide a template for the submission of requests, requiring information on:

- Relevance to the objective, functions and work programme of IPBES;
- Urgency of action by IPBES in the light of the imminence of the risks caused by the issues to be addressed by such action;
- Relevance of the requested action in addressing specific policies or processes;
- Geographic scope of the requested action, as well as issues to be covered by such action;
- Anticipated level of complexity of the issues to be addressed by the requested action;

- Previous work and existing initiatives of a similar nature and evidence of remaining gaps, such as the absence or limited availability of information and tools to address the issues, and reasons why IPBES is best suited to take action;
- Availability of scientific literature and expertise for IPBES to undertake the requested action;
- Scale of the potential impacts, and potential beneficiaries of the requested action;
- Requirements for financial and human resources, and potential duration of the requested action;
- An identification of priorities within multiple requests submitted.

All requests, inputs and suggestions received are considered and prioritized by the MEP and the Bureau, and subsequently considered by the Plenary.

The full procedure for receiving and prioritizing requests made to IPBES is available in decision IPBES-1/3: [https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/downloads/Decision\\_IPBES-1\\_3\\_en.pdf](https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/downloads/Decision_IPBES-1_3_en.pdf)

### 3.2.2 Examples of processes for the submission of requests under multilateral environmental agreements

Many countries have established processes at the national level through which they develop their requests to IPBES. The governing bodies of some multilateral environmental agreements have also established processes for the submission of requests to IPBES:

The Conference of the Parties to the **Convention on Biological Diversity**, in 2014, established a two-step process: In a first step, the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Convention prepares a set of requests. In practice, the work of the subsidiary body is informed by submissions from Parties to the Convention. In a second step, the subsidiary body submits the requests it had prepared to the Conference of the Parties for consideration and approval. The procedure is available at: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-12/cop-12-dec-25-en.pdf>

An example of requests submitted to IPBES is available at: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-14/cop-14-dec-36-en.pdf>

Under the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora**, the Standing Committee of the Convention, working with the Chairs of the Animals and Plants Committees and the Secretariat, is mandated to ensure that CITES requests and input to intersessional and regular work undertaken by IPBES are provided in accordance with relevant timelines.

The relevant decision by the Conference of the Parties is available here: <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/document/E-Res-18-04.pdf>

The Conference of the Parties to the **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals** has called on the Standing Committee of the Convention to participate in the development of the IPBES rolling work programme up to 2030 and, based on a proposal from the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council, to submit inputs as necessary, in line with the priorities of the Convention. The relevant decision by the Conference of the Parties is available here: [https://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/cms\\_cop13\\_res.10.8\\_rev.cop13\\_e.pdf](https://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/cms_cop13_res.10.8_rev.cop13_e.pdf)

## 3.3 NOMINATING EXPERTS

### 3.3.1 Process for the nomination of experts

IPBES issues calls for the nomination of qualified experts to assist with various tasks approved by the Plenary including the scoping or the preparation of a new assessment or to serve as members of a task force. Governments and relevant stakeholders are invited to submit nominations in response to these calls (relevant stakeholders, in this context, are qualified national, regional and international scientific organizations, centres of excellence and institutions known for their work and expertise, including experts on indigenous and local knowledge on issues related to the functions and programme of work of IPBES).

The nominations have to be made through an online portal on the IPBES web site. Both nominee, i.e. an expert, and nominator, i.e. the national focal point or representative of a relevant stakeholder organization, need to have an account on the IPBES website.

In a first step, the nominee fills in an application form, providing a curriculum vitae and information about their specific relevant expertise. The nominee also enters the email address of a nominator, i.e. the IPBES national focal point, for nomination by a Government, or a representative of an organization for nominations by stakeholders. The chosen nominator is automatically notified and invited to formally nominate the expert through the portal. The nominator can provide additional information in support of the nomination.

The MEP reviews all nominations received and selects a group of experts in accordance with applicable criteria. For example, for assessment expert groups, no more than 20% of experts should be selected from those nominated

by stakeholders. Expert groups should reflect the range of scientific, technical and socioeconomic views and expertise; geographical representation, with appropriate representation of experts from developing and developed countries and countries with economies in transition; the diversity of existing knowledge systems and gender balance. The Bureau oversees the selection process from a procedural perspective. All nominators and nominees are informed about the outcome of the selection process and the final list of experts is made public on the IPBES website.

### 3.3.2 Examples of national nomination processes

Many IPBES members have established national processes to select experts to be nominated by the national focal point to IPBES. Examples of elements of such national processes include:

*Prior to the call for nomination of experts:*

- Communication of the role and added value of participating as an expert in IPBES assessments at all relevant national events;
- Identification of funding to support the participation of experts in IPBES assessments, for experts from countries not eligible for support (e.g., compensation for working hours and travel cost)

*During the call for nomination of experts:*

- Wide communication of the IPBES call for nomination of experts to all relevant stakeholders through various channels, including email listservs, websites and social media;
- Active search for experts, contacting them directly when relevant;
- Provision of support to experts on how to complete the application form on the IPBES portal;
- Screening of the nomination list using a set of criteria for selection and development of a final list of nominees;
- Confirmation of the nomination of experts through the IPBES portal.

## 3.4 REVIEWING DRAFTS OF IPBES PRODUCTS

### 3.4.1 Process for reviewing assessments, scoping reports and other IPBES products

The procedures for the preparation of IPBES deliverables foresee that drafts of IPBES assessments are reviewed multiple times. For example, for thematic assessments, a first draft is peer-reviewed by experts, a second draft is

peer-reviewed by Governments and experts in parallel and the final draft is reviewed by Governments. In addition, the MEP may make other draft deliverables, such as draft scoping reports, workshop reports or draft work programme documents available for review in order to enhance their policy-relevance.

The IPBES secretariat informs IPBES members and stakeholders before a review period begins through a notification. Upcoming review periods are also listed in the IPBES calendar on the website. At the start of the review period, a notification with specific information on how to access the draft document is issued.

Anyone interested in reviewing a draft document needs to have an account on the IPBES website and, with this account, must also register as a reviewer for that specific draft, thereby consenting to the terms of the review. Comments have to be provided in a specific template which is available on the webpage for that review.

Comments provided on drafts of assessments will be published on the website, together with the responses by the assessment expert group.

### 3.4.2 Examples of national processes to organize review comments

Many IPBES members have established national processes to prepare their review comments, bringing together expertise from various sectors. The national processes vary depending on the national context. Some examples of activities include:

- Distribution of the IPBES notification to a broad network of relevant stakeholders and/or more targeted groups and communities with general and/or more specific information;
- Use of different social media platforms to communicate with relevant groups and networks about the IPBES review processes, by retweeting/reposting messages from the IPBES secretariat or crafting and issuing targeted messages;
- Organization of information meeting(s) for a wider audience and/or dialogue meeting(s) with invited participants;
- Establishment of a core group of experts with relevant expertise from different organizations, Government agencies and ministries to discuss comments and further consider the draft documents and other issues raised;
- Coordination with, where established, the national science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services to reach out to a broad group of relevant experts, practitioners and policymakers.

## 3.5 SUPPORTING THE UPTAKE OF COMPLETED IPBES ASSESSMENTS

### 3.5.1 Approval and launch of an IPBES assessment

When the Plenary approves the undertaking of an assessment, it also specifies at which Plenary session it will consider the final assessment report. At that session, the Plenary reviews the summary for policymakers of the assessment line-by-line, approves the summary, and accepts the chapters of that assessment report.

Assessment experts are present during the consideration of the assessment report to answer questions and address comments.

The draft of the assessment report prepared for consideration by the Plenary, the deliberations of the Plenary as well as all in-session drafts of the assessment are confidential. Once the Plenary has approved the summary for policymakers and accepted the chapters, the secretariat prepares an advance unedited version, which is launched at a press conference a few days after the Plenary session concludes.

In the lead-up to a session of the Plenary, national focal points are invited to nominate a communications focal point. The IPBES communications team works with these communications focal points in preparing for the launch of the assessment report at the press conference and amplifying the impact of the assessment report.

The summary for policymakers is made available as final, edited version in all six official UN languages. Resources permitting, the secretariat also prepares laid-out versions of the summary for policymakers and arranges for the printing of a limited number of hard copies. Additional launch events can be organized for the laid-out versions in different languages.

Following the launch of an assessment report, all IPBES members and stakeholders are invited to organize uptake events for the assessment. Resources permitting, the IPBES secretariat supports these events with the provision of materials such as posters and standard presentations.

### 3.5.2 Examples of uptake events

Two calls for contributions, to support the uptake of the IPBES Regional Assessment Reports and the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in 2018 and 2019, have resulted in more than 200 separate

uptake events, held at national, regional and global levels and in all regions.

Uptake events vary in scope, focus, format and audience and are usually hosted by Governments or institutions and organizations in the wider IPBES community. They range from lunch briefings at the institution of the national focal point or half-day seminars or workshops with other ministries and agencies to national/(sub)regional IPBES conferences or dialogues for a wider audience of practitioners and policymakers. They can focus on all key findings of an IPBES assessment report or key findings relevant for one or several sector(s) and/or topic(s).

## 3.6 ENGAGING WITH THE FUNCTIONS OF IPBES OTHER THAN ASSESSMENTS

While there are clear entry points for engaging with the IPBES assessment process, as described in the previous sections, work on the other three functions of IPBES is still evolving. However, there are already a number of ways in which national focal points can engage in these areas of work:

- Building capacity:
  - Usually, each IPBES assessment and some of the IPBES task forces are supported by the IPBES fellowship programme. Where this is the case, national focal points are invited to nominate early career scientists to participate in the programme. The programme allows a small number of fellows to participate in the work of the assessments and task forces and to benefit from the mentorship of a senior expert;
  - National focal points are encouraged to make use of the capacity-building resources that IPBES has developed, such as the IPBES webinar series;
  - National focal points are also encouraged to participate in and/or nominate colleagues to participate in IPBES national focal point dialogue meetings. The meetings are organized regularly in the context of the review of a draft IPBES assessment report or other products and are intended to support IPBES members in reviewing and submitting comments on these drafts and foster exchange among IPBES national focal points;
  - National focal points could also consider organizing uptake events at the national and subnational levels to inform stakeholders in their country about completed assessment reports and the policy options they provide. The IPBES secretariat supports the organization of uptake events through the provision of

materials, facilitation of expert participation and other similar support, where resources allow;

- National focal points may also encourage relevant organizations in their countries to align their work with the capacity-building rolling plan of IPBES, which focusses on learning and engagement, facilitating access to expertise and information, and strengthening national and regional capacities, thus increasing the reach and impact of IPBES in their countries.
- Supporting policy:
  - National focal points may encourage and facilitate the use of completed IPBES assessment reports in decision-making. This could involve the translation of completed IPBES assessment reports into national languages beyond the six official UN languages; the preparation of policy briefs translating the policy options set out in IPBES assessments to the national level; the organization of expert meetings with representatives of all relevant sectors of the Government; or using completed assessment reports as a reference in international environmental negotiations. IPBES has started to support such activities, where resources allow. For example, IPBES provides guidance on the translation of completed assessments into national languages and has piloted a workshop to exchange experiences regarding the use of IPBES assessments in decision-making in Africa. IPBES experts have also participated, in their personal capacity, in national meetings with decision-makers, including Parliamentary hearings. National focal points may also wish to inform IPBES about any use of the work of IPBES in decision-making or science through the TRACK database: <https://www.ipbes.net/impact-tracking>;
- Strengthening knowledge foundations:
  - IPBES assessments identify and prioritize knowledge gaps, which include key scientific information needed for policymakers at appropriate scales to implement the policy options set out in the assessment reports as well as knowledge and data needed to improve IPBES assessments in the future. National focal points can play a vital role in bringing the identified knowledge gaps to the attention of national and subnational research programming organizations, leading academic institutions or think-tanks and engaging in dialogue with key scientific organizations, in order to generate funding for new research projects to fill these gaps. IPBES is also developing a process for communicating the identified gaps and engaging with major research programming organizations at the regional level.

### 3.7 COORDINATING NATIONAL ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION THROUGH NATIONAL AND/OR REGIONAL PLATFORMS

National science-policy platforms on biodiversity and ecosystem services may provide a valuable asset for national focal points to mobilise and coordinate national engagement in IPBES. An established and dedicated network of key national actors may help national focal points engage effectively with a broad audience, while also providing a pool of resources that can be drawn upon to support and supplement the work of national focal points.

A number of countries have already established national platforms. The structure and modus operandi of different platforms vary greatly depending on national context, needs, and priorities. Nevertheless, platforms supporting the work of IPBES generally have in common that they provide a space for:

- Sharing information with national experts and other knowledge-holders, practitioners, and decision- and policymakers about IPBES processes, products, and how to engage with its work; and
- Coordinating and collaborating on joint activities related to IPBES and other biodiversity-related topics to strengthen the national science-policy interface.

Examples of activities undertaken by these platforms to augment the work of national focal points include:

- Identification, nomination and mobilisation of experts and other stakeholders to take part in the production, review and use of IPBES deliverables;
- Organization of uptake events to disseminate information about IPBES and key messages from IPBES deliverables;
- Mobilisation of national efforts to address knowledge gaps identified in IPBES assessments;
- Organization of capacity-building events to strengthen individual and institutional capacities at the national level for engaging with the work of IPBES; and
- Coordination and implementation of national activities related to the work of IPBES and the wider biodiversity agenda, such as the undertaking of national ecosystem assessments.

Resources for existing platforms, and for those countries interested in establishing national platforms in the context of IPBES, are available on the IPBES website: <https://ipbes.net/national-regional-platforms-networks>. The website also includes a full list of all IPBES national platforms which have been notified to the secretariat by the respective national

focal point. National focal points wishing to register new platforms may do so through this form: <https://ipbes.net/form/national-platforms>.

Further work under the IPBES rolling work programme up to 2030 to promote and facilitate the development of national and regional platforms includes the organization of activities aimed at facilitating dialogue, knowledge-sharing and peer-learning among existing platforms, countries interested in establishing a national platform, and actors that may support such initiatives. National focal points interested in more information about such activities are invited to contact the technical support unit on capacity-building ([tsu.capacitybuilding@ipbes.net](mailto:tsu.capacitybuilding@ipbes.net)).

## 3.8 SUPPORTING THE UNDERTAKING OF NATIONAL OR SUBREGIONAL ASSESSMENTS BY GOVERNMENTS

### 3.8.1 IPBES resources for undertaking assessments

IPBES does not undertake national assessments of biodiversity and ecosystem services. However, national assessments can be a very valuable tool to evaluate the status of biodiversity in a country, identify the most important drivers of biodiversity loss, develop specific scenarios and policy options, and thereby bring matters related to biodiversity to the forefront of the national discourse and contribute to the implementation of international commitments.

The IPBES national focal point can play an important role in the organization of a national assessment. Many of the methodologies, guidelines and resources prepared by IPBES can be used in the preparation of a national assessment, for example:

- The IPBES conceptual framework: The conceptual framework is a simplified model of the complex interactions between the natural world and human societies. The model identifies the main elements, together with their interactions, that are most relevant to the objective of IPBES and serves as a conceptual and analytical tool that provides structure and comparability for the different IPBES assessments. Further information on the IPBES conceptual framework is available here: <https://ipbes.net/conceptual-framework> and e-learning opportunities on the framework at: <https://ipbes.net/e-learning>

- The IPBES guide to assessments: IPBES has developed a guide to help address conceptual, procedural and practical aspects of IPBES assessments and to promote consistency across different scales. While primarily developed for experts contributing to IPBES assessments, the guide can also assist those who might want to undertake IPBES-inspired assessments at subregional, national and local level and help to ensure that such assessments are aligned and comparable with larger-scale assessments approved by IPBES. The guide focusses on key elements that assessment practitioners may want to take into account when undertaking an assessment. Further information on the guide for assessments is available here: <https://ipbes.net/guide-production-assessments>

### 3.8.2 Examples of national and subregional assessment processes

Since the establishment of IPBES in 2012, several countries have undertaken national or subregional assessments of biodiversity and ecosystem services. There are some international projects underway to support these initiatives, such as the work by the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre in partnership with UNDP and UNESCO and financially supported by the German International Climate Initiative. This initiative aims to build capacity at the national level to undertake ecosystem assessments and support the uptake of assessment findings into national decision-making. Countries utilise the IPBES assessment process (including developing a scoping report, author selection, peer review, etc.) and conceptual framework tailored to their national situation to carry out their own ecosystem assessment. Countries are supported through a number of capacity-building and knowledge exchange activities and materials, which can be found here: <https://www.unep-wcmc.org/featured-projects/national-ecosystem-assessments> and <http://www.ecosystemassessments.net/>.

## 3.9 RESOURCES FOR IPBES NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS

There is a range of resources available to support the work of IPBES national focal points:

- IPBES webinar series: <https://ipbes.net/webinars>
- IPBES e-learning modules: <https://ipbes.net/e-learning>
- IPBES videos: <https://www.youtube.com/user/ipbeschannel>
- IPBES podcasts: <https://link.chtbl.com/cNKLPxsi>
- IPBES impact tracking database (TRACK): <https://ipbes.net/impact-tracking-view>
- Dialogue meetings for IPBES national focal points

# CHAPTER 4

## SESSIONS OF THE IPBES PLENARY

### 4.1 HOSTING A SESSION OF THE PLENARY

The Plenary, at each session, considers and where possible decides on the date and venue of its next session. IPBES members interested in hosting a session of the Plenary are invited to inform the secretariat as early as possible of their intention. The secretariat can provide guidance with regard to the financial and logistical requirements for hosting a session of the Plenary.

### 4.2 PREPARING FOR THE MEETING

About six months before a session of the Plenary, the secretariat issues a notification with information on the date and venue of the session as well as a provisional agenda.

At this point, participants are invited to complete an online registration form to register for the session.

To participate in a session of the Plenary, each IPBES member is required to submit official credentials of its representative, together with the names of alternate representatives and advisers, to the IPBES secretariat. The credentials must be issued either by the Head of State or Government or by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, consistent with each country's policy and law. Each Government is encouraged to send a copy of the credentials to the secretariat in advance of the session, preferably by electronic means.

For developing countries, the IPBES secretariat, resources permitting, provides financial support to cover travel expenses corresponding to the most economical and direct flights for one representative from each country. The notification provides information on how representatives requiring financial assistance can request such support.

Observers previously admitted to a session of the Plenary can register via the online portal; organizations

that want to apply for observer status can also do so via the portal.

Six weeks before the meeting, the secretariat makes all working documents for the meeting available on the IPBES website in all six UN languages. Information documents for the meeting follow shortly thereafter. The working documents usually contain a set of draft decisions to facilitate the work of the Plenary.

### 4.3 AT THE MEETING

#### 4.3.1 Registration and credentials

Upon arrival at the conference venue, participants are required to proceed to a registration desk, where they will be asked to provide an ID which will be compared to their pre-registration in order to receive a conference badge.

At this point, Government representatives should also submit their original credentials. These need to be submitted as soon as possible, but no later than 24 hours after the opening of the session. Only those Governments that have submitted credentials issued by the relevant authorities may participate fully in the session.

#### 4.3.2 During the meeting (in-session)

Sessions of the IPBES Plenary are usually held over a period of 5-7 days, depending on the programme for the session. Official meetings start at 10 a.m.; the consideration of assessments often continues late into the evening hours. Work is usually conducted in two parallel working groups. The schedule for the day is made available via screens in the conference venue and a mobile application.

The rules of procedure for the Plenary of IPBES, which govern the conduct of its sessions, are available at: [https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/downloads/IPBES\\_rules\\_of\\_procedure.pdf](https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/downloads/IPBES_rules_of_procedure.pdf)

### 4.3.3 Regional coordination

Regional coordination meetings are usually held the day before the start of a Plenary session. In addition, regional groups meet in the mornings, before official meetings start, as well as on an ad-hoc basis, where required. The regional coordination meetings are organized by the Bureau members of the region.

During the opening session of the Plenary, the IPBES Chair usually invites statements by regional groups.

## 4.4 FOLLOW-UP

The final edited version of the report of a session of the Plenary in all six UN languages, including the decisions taken at a session, is usually published a few weeks after the session.





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