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

Paris, 29 April–4 May 2019

Item 8 of the provisional agenda*

**Review of the Platform at the conclusion of its
first work programme****Review of the effectiveness of the administrative and scientific
functions of the Platform**

1. As part of the first work programme of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the Plenary, in its decision IPBES-2/5, mandated a review of the effectiveness of the administrative and scientific functions of IPBES and requested the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, in consultation with the Bureau, to develop a procedure for that review. At its fourth session, the Plenary considered a draft procedure for the review and, in its decision IPBES-4/1, section VII, requested the further refinement of the scope and terms of reference of the review.
2. In its decision IPBES-5/2, the Plenary approved the terms of reference for the review, including an internal and an external element. In the same decision, it also approved the execution of an internal review by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau and the transmission of its conclusions to the external reviewers. The Plenary also requested the Executive Secretary to call for the nomination of candidates for the review panel and to conduct a competitive bidding process for an external professional organization to coordinate the review. The Plenary requested the review panel, in accordance with the terms of reference, to provide a final report on the review, including recommendations on the implementation of the second work programme of IPBES, to the Plenary at its seventh session.
3. In its decision IPBES-6/1, section VIII, the Plenary took note of the report prepared by the internal review team (IPBES/6/INF/32) and requested the Bureau, the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the secretariat to consider which of the issues identified in the internal review and lessons learned could be addressed in the current work programme, including with regard to the implementation of any pending assessments approved by the Plenary at its sixth session and the full implementation and better integration of the four functions of IPBES. In response to those requests, a number of activities have been identified, and related information is set out in document IPBES/7/INF/17.
4. In the same decision, the Plenary also took note of the selection of the members of the review panel to perform the review and of the selection of an external professional organization to coordinate the review, and it requested the Executive Secretary to initiate arrangements for the external review at the earliest opportunity after the Plenary's sixth session. The report of the review panel is set out in document IPBES/7/INF/18. The executive summary and recommendations of that report are set out in the annex to the present document. Responses to the report of the review panel from the Bureau and the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel, and from the Executive Secretary, are set out in documents IPBES/7/INF/19 and IPBES/7/INF/20, respectively.

* IPBES/7/1/Rev.1.

Annex

Review of the first work programme of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

Report of the review panel

I. Executive summary

A. Context

1. As the present report is being finalized, the World Economic Forum, meeting in Davos, Switzerland, is considering its annual Global Risks Report. Ten years ago, the major risks identified were almost all economic. However, in the Global Risks Report for 2019, two major issues were identified as global risks to business and human society: cyber security and the deteriorating environment. Climate change had been included previously, and the 2019 report features it prominently, alongside biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse, the global water crisis, and natural (sic) disasters. That the attention of business and political leaders is now focusing on these issues and, critically, on the links and feedback among them, means there is a vital need for clear, unambiguous advice on the status and drivers of biodiversity and ecosystem degradation and, importantly, on options and solutions to address these challenges in an integrated way to achieve sustainable development. Pursuant to its mandate, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) fills the role of that provider of advice, and our review sits in that context.

2. In its decision IPBES-5/2, the IPBES Plenary approved the terms of reference for a review process to cover the first work programme. At its sixth meeting, in Medellín, Colombia, in March 2018, the Plenary approved 10 members of a review panel, with broad terms of reference, to provide a review report on the effectiveness of the administrative and scientific functions of the Platform and recommendations to help to frame the second work programme of IPBES, to be considered by the Plenary at its seventh session. Importantly, the review assessed the effectiveness of IPBES as a science-policy interface and its positioning for long-term impact.

B. Overall finding

3. While its antecedents can be traced back to the G8 meeting held in Evian, France, in 2003, IPBES has, in the seven years since its formal establishment and five years of active work, garnered considerable achievements to its name in the area of knowledge advancement in biodiversity and ecosystem services, despite an underfunded budget that is insufficient to support its ambitious but overcommitted work programme.

4. The Platform completed seven assessment reports between 2014 and 2018, with a global assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services underway and scheduled to be considered by the Plenary in 2019. It has established a governance structure as an intergovernmental platform, rules of procedure, a functional secretariat, a membership of 131 countries and a network of national focal points, partnerships and communities of experts. This provides solid foundations for IPBES to grow. Yet, as with any similar organization, there is always room for improvement. This has been confirmed by the review findings, which highlight several weaknesses among the preconditions and assumptions that underlie the logic on which IPBES has been designed and implemented. The review, therefore, has set out a palette of potential areas of improvement for consideration by the Plenary.

C. Review methodology

5. The review panel used an approach combining reflections on an earlier 2017 internal review, a detailed online survey, in-depth interviews with a wide range of stakeholders and national focal points. It also commissioned two studies on media and publications and held several focus group meetings on specific issues. This provided scope for triangulation – cross-checking among sources and methods – to help to ensure the credibility and veracity of the findings. It also provided an opportunity for retrospective elucidation and testing of aspects of the change logic or “theory of change” of IPBES – that is, the logic on which its design and implementation have been based in order to realize the intended long-term impact. The review panel considered the extent to which IPBES has been conceptualized, positioned, structured and implemented to date to achieve a long-term impact on science and policy in relation to biodiversity and ecosystem services.

D. Summary of findings

6. **Conceptualization and positioning:** The review panel found that IPBES has been built on a solid foundation and will continue to offer a strong value proposition for stakeholders over the next decade. In a crowded landscape, it has significant scientific credibility and a clearly defined and important niche as an intergovernmental platform working at the global science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services. It benefits from a wide sense of stakeholder ownership and several unique features that constitute major strengths. However, its positioning for impact has been impeded by an early focus on producing scientific assessments, with the inherently challenging science-policy interface dimension not yet having been fully addressed, insufficient focus on an explicit strategy guided by a clearly formulated vision and mission and insufficient synergetic collaboration and partnerships – including with its four United Nations partner organizations (the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) and under several multilateral environmental agreements - despite the Platform's early and laudable recognition of the importance of engaging multiple stakeholders in its work.

7. **Governance, structures and procedures:** IPBES has achieved much to date in establishing fully operational governance and operational structures, as well as the necessary rules of procedure. The performance and commitment of the IPBES secretariat and its technical support units are considered to be particular strengths. However, despite good progress, IPBES continues to face challenges pertaining to its legal status; its gender, disciplinary (especially in the social sciences) and geographic balance; the appropriate inclusion of all knowledge systems; and ensuring that its governance bodies fulfil clear, essential and useful roles without unnecessary duplication.

8. **Implementation:** IPBES has had impressive success in catalysing the generation of new knowledge. The review panel is of the view that the volume of scientific assessments and associated summaries for policymakers represent a large and important advance in global understanding of the status of and trends in biodiversity and ecosystem services. Yet several critical issues require urgent attention. The policy relevance and actionability of the assessments, especially at the national level, can be improved. Progress has been uneven across the four functions, with the policy support function being the least successfully pursued and slow progress in the Platform's complex yet very important capacity-building efforts. There have been significant and continuously improving efforts to incorporate indigenous and local knowledge into IPBES processes, yet improvements are still necessary, including in engaging productively with indigenous peoples and local communities and ensuring the participation of indigenous knowledge holders.

9. **Finances:** Available resources have been effectively and efficiently managed, and the agreed ambitious work programme has been delivered within available resources. The realignment of financial resources to deliver the assessments amid funding challenges was particularly impressive. The financial measures reflect the turbulent and rapid start of IPBES. Due attention has to be given in the future to managing its net assets, stabilizing its net operating ratio above zero and ensuring a positive operating reserve ratio. The lack of reliable long-term sources of income is of particular concern, and the financial sustainability of IPBES remains vulnerable to fluctuations in voluntary national contributions. The fundraising strategy is not yet convincing with regard to the level of innovation needed to address these concerns.

10. **Emerging impact:** It is too early to make definitive statements about the impact of IPBES, as there tends to be a significant time lag between the production, uptake, influence and long-term impact of such knowledge, and it is generally difficult to predict the pathways by which knowledge will have an impact. IPBES has already made an important and positive contribution to understanding the root causes of biodiversity loss and ecosystem service degradation and has also had ripple effects in mobilizing academic groups and informal regional environmental and conservation coalitions. It appears to have had significant success in reaching global policymakers and, to a lesser extent, national policymakers and scientists not directly linked to its work. It has been much less successful in reaching practitioners (i.e., the implementers of conservation and development projects), and has yet to reach local policymakers, the private sector and citizens. Although IPBES is well positioned to contribute to large-scale systems change, this aspect has not been sufficiently considered in official IPBES decisions.

11. In the body of the full report (IPBES/7/INF/18), we provide 45 findings, each with detailed explanation, and these lead to 36 recommendations. Full descriptions of the findings and recommendations are to be found in the full report and are summarized in tables at the end of the present annex.

II. Recommendations

12. The review panel identified six overarching areas that require the attention of the Platform's membership, leadership, partners and other stakeholders and on which IPBES needs to reflect if it is to fulfil its mandate as a science-policy interface.

A. **In order to ensure its strategic importance and sustainability in the long term, IPBES has to be more intentional about its ultimate impact on the status of biodiversity and ecosystem services and maintain and strengthen its niche, value proposition and comparative advantage in a complex landscape with many competing priorities.**

13. An agreed, clearly articulated vision, mission and adaptive strategy, cognizant of the multiple systems and the ecosystem in which IPBES operates, will help to clarify the role of IPBES as an interface and the ultimate impact that the Platform seeks to achieve as external contexts evolve. Essential to the mission is that the four functions of IPBES¹ are seen and managed as an integrated set. In particular, IPBES should be more robust in recognizing that its ability to have a long-term, sustainable and transformative impact through knowledge generated by assessments will largely rely on its capacity to address more prominently and successfully its other three functions.

B. **IPBES has to strengthen significantly the policy dimensions of its work. Building the evidence base is necessary but not sufficient.**

14. The science-policy interface could be created through a co-design and co-production process that should not see assessments as end products; the interface needs to be developed and actively managed. Priorities that are essential to ensuring a more policy-relevant IPBES in the future include:

(a) Using "policy relevance" to frame all aspects of IPBES work, rather than as a procedural mechanism to keep scientific advice in check or avoid the thorny but all too important issue of providing policy options;

(b) Extending the scope of expertise included in IPBES to encompass practitioners, including managers of biodiversity assets;

(c) Developing capacities in respect of how the policy process works and how to generate policy choices as part of IPBES assessment products;

(d) Addressing knowledge needs in a more nuanced manner, including the need for more explicit efforts to provide simple arguments on why biodiversity and ecosystems services matter, and the need to provide actionable evidence, tools and options to a range of public and private decision makers;

(e) Providing a range of policy options from which decision makers can choose, with assessments of risk and of options for mitigating those risks.

C. **IPBES has to do more to address the tension between the global and regional scope of its work and recognize the essentially national and local nature of implementation.**

15. IPBES processes and products have to be useful at the national level, where policies and strategies are designed and implemented to address demands and needs from the local level to the global level. Assessments should, therefore, be scoped and shaped with stronger engagement of policy experts, policy practitioners and biodiversity managers. Ongoing dialogues and processes of engagement with national focal points can be considered to help to ensure that the generated knowledge can be integrated into national plans.

¹ The functions of IPBES are to identify key scientific information needed for policymakers; to perform regular and timely assessments of knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystem services; to support policy formulation and implementation; and to prioritize key capacity-building needs to strengthen the science-policy interface.

D. IPBES has to develop a clearer and more strategic approach to its stakeholders, including by clarifying its partnerships strategy and allowing for more strategic engagement by a key set of partners.

16. There is currently a very significant lack of clarity in IPBES regarding the various types of actors that are interested or involved in the Platform and the limited pathways to participation in IPBES activities. More work has to be done (a) to understand the complex web of stakeholders and potential contributors to deliverables and to navigate the science-policy interface; and (b) to engage them in IPBES processes in a more collaborative and appropriate fashion. Stakeholder engagement should not be considered solely as the responsibility of the secretariat; instead, its importance at multiple levels, including the national level, should be recognized and influence IPBES operations. A differentiated approach to stakeholder engagement should be taken that allows actors to engage substantively in IPBES work in accordance with their status and capacity, with a view to leveraging their institutional support, expertise and operational capabilities, and for these actors to more directly benefit from engaging in IPBES. This is essential in the densely populated institutional landscape and in view of the need to mainstream biodiversity among a range of sectors.

E. While assessments have – for good reason -- featured prominently among the early deliverables of IPBES, and will remain at its core, care must be taken to streamline and strengthen relevant processes while not neglecting other important deliverables and priorities.

17. It will be important to view and manage assessments as a process rather than an end product. Much is known from the literature about what makes assessments a success, whether at the local, national or global level, and lessons should be drawn from these experiences. Among others, greater emphasis on cross-disciplinary, cross-specialist and cross-sector coproduction across multiple knowledge systems – and with continuing emphasis and innovation around indigenous and local knowledge – will be essential. The rapid pace of assessments to date might have to become more measured in the future in order to consider ways to diversify and modernize (a) aspects of the engagement, production and communication processes, and (b) the type and foci of the products, in order to serve a variety of well-targeted and influential audiences. At the same time, the interdependence and co-evolution of actions and results towards the desired impact require that other relevant IPBES deliverables and processes, such as policy support tools and methodologies and capacity-building efforts, which are important components of IPBES functions, not be neglected.

F. IPBES members, its partners and other committed stakeholders have to do more to help to ensure its financial sustainability in the long term.

18. The importance of IPBES as an initiative with potential for impact from the local level to the global level has not been reflected in a corresponding commitment of resources from national or international sources. The situation calls for much more focused efforts by all concerned to secure contributions from members; to better mobilize and recognize in-kind contributions; to match aspects of the work programme with available resources; to further develop partnerships, including through alliances with entities in sectors and fields of work that traditionally have not been engaged in IPBES; to explore other possible modalities of work;² and to launch specific projects to raise earmarked funds. It will also require IPBES to develop more sophisticated narratives to explain and position itself amid increasing competition worldwide for resources – whether financial, in-kind or in the form of expertise.

19. As with all reviews, some of the detailed recommendations that follow might have greater significance than others. However, it is the panel's view that, at least initially, they should be considered as a set, with a strong focus on the six overarching priorities outlined above.

² For example, through the use of web-based tools for reviewing the literature, machine learning approaches and better adapted strategies and systems for monitoring and evaluation and knowledge management.

Table of findings

Origins, conceptualization and positioning of IPBES

Finding 1	The creation of IPBES resulted from a protracted, complex and difficult process of discussion and international negotiation, which has helped to create a wide sense of ownership and provided a solid foundation from which the Platform can develop over time.
Finding 2	IPBES offers a strong value proposition for stakeholders that will last for at least the next decade – if its implementation progresses well. The latter can still be improved with respect to its policy support mandate and, to a lesser extent, with respect to its capacity-strengthening and knowledge-generation efforts (a significant part of its value for stakeholders).
Finding 3	IPBES has unique features that constitute major strengths: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has a large membership and intergovernmental status; • It seeks to address four functions explicitly as part of its mandate; • It is inclusive of all sources of knowledge and open to the participation of stakeholders; • It experiments in using different worldviews to inform its outputs.
Finding 4	There is a need for a more explicit and formal IPBES vision and mission that is linked to an overall strategic framework, which are prerequisites for a modern and forward-thinking organization. The lack of a unified vision and mission results in different views and expectations among the various experts, members, partners and other stakeholders taking part in the Platform regarding what IPBES is, what it is trying to achieve and where it should focus.
Finding 5	IPBES is clearly perceived and accepted as an intergovernmental global science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services, with the interfacing role of IPBES seen as adding important value in a crowded institutional landscape. However, there are divergent views of what that interfacing role entails.
Finding 6	IPBES has prioritized building its scientific and technical credibility over policy application and subsequent implementation in its first years. While that is both understandable and in some ways desirable, IPBES is operating largely as a science-based organization that has yet to fully engage with and effectively navigate the interface between data, science, policy and practice, and thereby bridge the gap between knowledge and policy. Such navigation requires time, resources and engagement from all members, partners and other stakeholders of the Platform to yield results. Finally, there is a tacit expectation that knowledge will have influence just by “being”. This is not a valid assumption.
Finding 7	The issue of partnership is crucial for the positioning and acceptance of IPBES. The stakeholder mapping shows a very complex landscape of organizations and stakeholder groups that could be or are already interacting and collaborating with IPBES as partners. While IPBES has formalized a number of partnership agreements in the course of the first work programme, their effective implementation has been hampered by the single formal status of observers available to all non-members and non-State actors (partners or otherwise), which has prevented their full strategic engagement. In addition, the current IPBES stakeholder strategy has not enabled the degree of synergetic collaboration and engagement with the range of stakeholders envisaged at its establishment.
Finding 8	Despite much activity early on in shepherding the process of the Platform’s formation, even at one stage by proposing to jointly provide the secretariat, the potential value of the four United Nations organizations (FAO, UNDP, UNEP and UNESCO) is significantly underutilized, or even poorly understood, by all parties.
Finding 9	While interactions with the secretariat of and the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity have been positive and mutually supportive, there is room for stronger collaboration and alignment between IPBES and the other biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements at both formal (Conference of the Parties) and informal (secretariat) levels.
Finding 10	IPBES identified early on the importance of stakeholder engagement in its work and should be commended for that. At the same time, the extent of implementation has been limited.

Governance, structure and procedures

Finding 11	There is confusion regarding the legal status of IPBES among IPBES stakeholders and even national focal points. IPBES is often perceived as a United Nations body rather than an intergovernmental platform. While the IPBES secretariat is hosted and administered by UNEP, the Platform is an independent body with its own governance structure.
Finding 12	The founding principle of being policy relevant but not policy prescriptive has been implemented primarily through a set of procedures (e.g., calls for requests and input, the review and negotiation of summaries for policymakers rather than through strategically framing the work and outputs of IPBES and enabling the engagement of the policy and practitioner side throughout the process. Although other sources of knowledge have been incorporated into IPBES products to varying extents, it is science that has received the pre-eminent treatment and focus. This is likely, at least in part, the result of the mandate and principles by which it operates – specifically, by trying to walk the fine line between being relevant to policy and effective in communicating its key messages, while not being overly prescriptive in the policy and implementation choices offered.
Finding 13	For participation in all bodies of the platform, the principle of geographical balance among the five United Nations regions as well as overall gender balance has often resulted in slates of nominations that are balanced geographically and, to some extent, in terms of gender, but are not well-rounded in terms of disciplines and relevant skills. In the longer term, this risks undermining the credibility of IPBES.
Finding 14	IPBES still appears to have difficulty in engaging expertise beyond experts in the fields of biodiversity and ecosystem services. There are well-identified gaps in expertise, notably in the social sciences, that could compromise its capacity to execute its overall mandate and influence policy.
Finding 15	In this initial implementation phase of IPBES, significant efforts have been made to develop, refine and adopt a set of rules of procedure governing all aspects of IPBES work. But it is worth noting that they are difficult to access as they are distributed across a range of decisions and other information resources on the IPBES website.
Finding 16	IPBES governance structure appears to many participants to be over-engineered, with an overlap in the duties of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and Bureau, often leading to a duplication of effort and an unclear segregation of duties, which runs contrary to the principles of good governance.
Finding 17	Ensuring scientific independence – a fundamental rationale for setting up two subsidiary bodies – has been perceived not to work in practice. Such a perception is counterproductive for an organization with a goal to strengthen the interface between science and policy. The principle of scientific independence and the appropriate segregation of duties – which remain of critical importance to ensure the legitimacy and credibility of IPBES – should be strengthened through revised modalities.
Finding 18	The performance of the IPBES secretariat, the competence of its staff, and its strong commitment to the mission of IPBES is widely commended. The work of the secretariat is perceived to be a strength of IPBES, and the technical support units (as part of the secretariat) are also perceived positively. However, the chronic work overload of the secretariat and the lack of visibility and recognition of the work of the technical support units are issues of concern.
Finding 19	The IPBES website is not fit for purpose, although it has seen some improvements. It is unwieldy, not user-friendly and often lacks the information that is most often sought.
Finding 20	The establishment of supporting bodies (e.g., expert groups and task forces) to the Plenary is a grey area in terms of structures, defining objectives, accountability, status, utility of outputs and sunset clauses.

Implementation of the first work programme

Finding 21	The large volume of scientific assessments, and the associated summary for policymakers adopted by the Plenary, represent a large advance in our global knowledge of biodiversity and ecosystem services, and have contributed to the building of understanding and capacity among a range of knowledge brokers and policy developers and to the transfer of knowledge across the knowledge-policy interface.
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Implementation of the first work programme

Finding 22	<p>While it may be premature to assess the policy impact of the assessments produced by IPBES to date, there are several factors that limit the policy relevance of the assessment process and the reports, and therefore their likely influence on policies and decisions in the long run. They include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> IPBES tends to see assessments as end products rather than as part of a wider, more complex and longer-term process to influence policy; Members of the assessment scoping teams have been largely dominated by natural scientists (working on biodiversity issues), and an analysis of the scoping documents found little reference to either the co-production of assessments as a core approach or to communications or capacity-building activities that would occur in conjunction with the assessments. The regional assessments included more capacity-building efforts as part of their activities; With the exception of the pollination and pollinators assessment, their scope is often seen as occurring over scales that are larger than that by which biodiversity management typically operates; IPBES assessments have not sufficiently incorporated reviews of the effectiveness of existing policies. IPBES tends to see assessments as the ultimate products to influence policy.
Finding 23	<p>Linked to the previous finding, the lack of policy considerations in the process results in summaries for policymakers that are often too generic and do not allow Governments to take immediate and effective action in their own territories, even though they may be helpful in international discussions.</p>
Finding 24	<p>There are a range of knowledge management approaches and tools now available, in particular for literature reviews and evidence synthesis, that could usefully supplement the formal policy-driven intergovernmental process. Other alternative mechanisms for assessing the state of knowledge on issues (e.g., web-based assessments and machine learning approaches) are becoming increasingly available and could help IPBES to build on its core strengths (e.g., its inclusive and experimental nature).</p>
Finding 25	<p>During its first programme of work, IPBES had noteworthy successes in catalysing the generation of new knowledge. Regarding data management, there has been insufficient attention to developing an infrastructure, standards and guidance for systematically recording the data used in assessments, which is an important consideration to ensure that the work of IPBES is cumulative.</p>
Finding 26	<p>The policy support mechanism of IPBES has been implemented primarily through the development of an extensive online catalogue of policy support tools. However, a range of sources suggest that the policy support function remains the least successfully pursued of its functions.</p>
Finding 27	<p>The capacity-building function was a key element of the Busan outcome (UNEP/IPBES/3/3, annex). Capacity-building was recognized as being necessary to lift the level of global scientific expertise in biodiversity and ecosystem services and to provide capacity for new data acquisition, especially in the global South. The Platform has had important success in that regard, especially with the fellows programme. However, broader capacity-building efforts are still lagging in other areas of IPBES work. As the task is enormous, it is expected that a clearer partnership and stakeholder engagement strategy will help over time to improve this situation.</p>
Finding 28	<p>While much has been achieved in the first implementation phase, there is a strong consensus that progress has been uneven across the four functions. The assessment function has clearly been prioritized in terms of outputs, staff time and budget over the other three elements of the work programme.</p>
Finding 29	<p>While recognizing that the scientific output of IPBES has been impressive, the pace at which assessments have been produced raises questions regarding the longer-term sustainability of IPBES work (in terms of finances, in-kind contributions and staff capacity) and the prioritization of the other three functions.</p>
Finding 30	<p>The commitment of IPBES from the start to considering other knowledge systems, especially indigenous and local knowledge, in its work is widely commended, and efforts have been made to incorporate indigenous and local knowledge into IPBES processes, with noticeable improvements and learning over the past few years, not least as part of the ongoing global assessment. However, there is room for improvement.</p>

Implementation of the first work programme

Finding 31	Engagement with indigenous peoples and local communities seems to have generated important advances but also significant frustrations during the first years of IPBES.
Finding 32	Participation in IPBES, especially by indigenous knowledge holders, has been impeded by the lack of an operational participatory mechanism.

Budget and financial arrangements

Finding 33	The initial capital injection made by Norway, together with reliable and regular contributions from several other members, made it possible for IPBES to fulfil many of its obligations under the first work programme.
Finding 34	Some members have contributed only sporadically or not at all to date. This does not bode well for the sustainable operations of IPBES and should be rectified.
Finding 35	The Platform relies heavily on in-kind contributions from the scientific community, partners and nation States, from the self-funded participation of experts from developed countries in the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel to their participation in assessments and other activities.
Finding 36	Currently, IPBES spends about half its resources on the implementation of the work programme and half on the operation of the Platform and management functions. Most of the funding has been spent on the important regional and global assessments.
Finding 37	The available resources have been effectively and efficiently managed to date. The agreed work programme was effectively delivered within the available resources. However, managing long-term requirements through their alignment with reliable income sources should be a priority for the future.
Finding 38	The realignment of financial resources to ensure the delivery of the assessments in a timely fashion for the first work programme, especially considering the funding problems experienced during the process, was effective and impressive. IPBES should be commended for this achievement. However, it may not be easy to formalize the funding of the assessments and IPBES in the future, and the Platform will always be vulnerable to fluctuations in the level of voluntary national contributions.
Finding 39	The financial measures clearly reflect the turbulent and rapid start that IPBES made on its new journey. It is important that net assets be well managed in the future, and the net operating ratio must soon be stabilized above zero. The operating reserve ratio is still positive, but the trend is concerning. No information was available to conduct a liquidity assessment, but this should routinely be conducted into the future.
Finding 40	The review panel is aware of the current fundraising strategy being developed for IPBES to boost the income of the Platform. This is to be encouraged. However, the somewhat restricted attempts to engage the private sector in providing financial support for assessments in exchange for visibility are unlikely to yield significant results for sustainable financing.

Towards greater impact

Finding 41	IPBES communications have seen steady improvement over the course of the first work programme. IPBES has had significant success in reaching global policymakers and, to some extent, national policymakers and members of the scientific community who are not directly linked to IPBES. It is perceived as being much less successful in reaching practitioners (i.e. the implementers of conservation and development projects). And it appears and to have largely failed to reach local policymakers, the private sector or citizens to date.
Finding 42	IPBES is, in principle, well positioned to contribute to beneficial environmental change and improvements in human well-being. This aspect of its work has not been well articulated in official IPBES decisions, but is evident in many of its communication materials.
Finding 43	IPBES has made an important and positive contribution to understanding the root causes of biodiversity loss and ecosystem service degradation, and identifying critical knowledge gaps. The launch of IPBES has also resulted in calls for, and offers of, support from academic groups and informal regional environmental and conservation coalitions.

Towards greater impact

Finding 44	No definitive statements can yet be made about policy impact, as there is significant time lag between the production of global reports and their translation and appropriation by national actors, and multiple sources of information are considered in the policymaking process. However, there are a number of influencing factors within the IPBES sphere of control that should be considered to enhance the potential for impact. They include a range of appropriate partnerships beyond Governments that are imperative in order for IPBES to have an impact on policymaking and decision-making.
Finding 45	Partial testing of the change logic or “theory of change” of IPBES – that is, the logic on which its design and implementation have been based in order to effect the desired changes – has confirmed several weaknesses that have hindered or diminished the potential of IPBES to have a desirable long-term and sustainable impact. This increases the risk of slow progress or failure.

Table of recommendations*Origins, conceptualization and positioning of IPBES*

Recommendation 1	A formal vision and mission should be discussed and agreed by the Plenary. The vision and mission should serve to reaffirm the niche of IPBES, which many perceive to be that of an interface mechanism providing authoritative knowledge for policy development and decision-making and delivering through its four functions, which are seen as an integrated set. This vision and mission of IPBES should be supported by a short and well-focused strategic plan that embraces all activities of the Platform, against which future development and performance can be evaluated.
Recommendation 2	The Plenary should, in the context of the next work programme, clarify the various boundaries that IPBES is trying to span as a science-policy interface, along with the requirements and the vision for success in that regard, in order to prioritize and align resources and partnerships and to identify relevant types of outputs.
Recommendation 3	A clear strategy should be developed for enhanced and more synergetic collaboration and engagement with key strategic stakeholders as strategic partners, allowing for differentiation of status (beyond observer status) to enhance mutual benefits.
Recommendation 4	The stakeholder engagement processes within IPBES needs to be reviewed and strengthened to better deliver for the Platform and the stakeholders. In particular, stakeholder engagement should occur throughout the assessment process to implement the true co-production of assessments. This will critically rely on appropriate nominations by the Platform members, partners and other stakeholders, in particular of practitioners, biodiversity managers, policymakers and policy experts, and rely on the capacity to generate mutual benefits and to communicate and coordinate at different scales (interest, capacities and coordination should be developed at the national scale, then be leveraged by IPBES at regional and global scales).

Governance, structure and procedures

Recommendation 5	The exact legal status of IPBES should be clarified and effectively communicated, as this has wide-ranging implications, including in terms of partnership development, fundraising and communications.
Recommendation 6	The principles of scientific independence and the appropriate segregation of duties – which remain of critical importance to ensure the legitimacy and credibility of IPBES – should be strengthened through appropriate revised modalities and procedures.
Recommendation 7	The “policy relevant but not policy prescriptive” principle should be supplemented with a principle on co-design, co-production and co-implementation, with appropriate procedures in place to maintain scientific credibility and independence.
Recommendation 8	IPBES needs to diversify and be more explicit about the different kinds of expertise needed for different activities, and the criteria applied for expert selection, to strengthen the policy dimension within IPBES. In addition to the existing criteria for regional, gender and disciplinary diversity/scientific credentials, criteria aiming to strengthen the capacity of IPBES to operate at the interface between data, science, policy and practice should be included.
Recommendation 9	There is a need to improve the reach of the process for nominating individuals to take part in the Platform’s activities, and to improve the quality of the experts

Governance, structure and procedures

	nominated to IPBES. This is a key responsibility of members of the Platform. One approach could be to establish national IPBES committees, chaired by the national focal points, that can assist the nomination processes.
Recommendation 10	The separation created by the establishment of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel and the Bureau as two distinct bodies has become both cumbersome and seems to add little value. Considering other constraints (notably in terms of the budget and staff time used to support committees), there is an opportunity for a more streamlined governance architecture that the Plenary should consider going forward.
Recommendation 11	The current rules of procedure need to be checked for relevance, updated as necessary and made accessible in a more user-friendly way.
Recommendation 12	There are opportunities for strengthening the impact of the secretariat, including through matching expectations with the resources available, administrative processes and reporting lines with the host agency and the development of an information management strategy.
Recommendation 13	Greater recognition of the critical role of the technical support units within IPBES – for example, in operationalizing the roll-out of assessments, is required and needs to be formalized and better supported to ensure more consistent engagement of the technical support units in the work of IPBES.
Recommendation 14	IPBES should develop comprehensive guidance on national focal point roles and good practice (while allowing for countries to define their own modalities) and develop dedicated channels for communications between IPBES and national focal points and for interaction among the national focal points themselves.

Implementation of the first work programme

Recommendation 15	IPBES needs to align the ambitions and scope of its work programme to its budget and staff capacities. The Plenary has a major responsibility in ensuring that the aspirations are met with commensurate resources to deliver on them.
Recommendation 16	IPBES needs to take a more holistic approach to assessments to ensure that both the process and products serve the IPBES goals of enhancing its role as a science (knowledge)-policy interface, helping to address the issues of biodiversity and ecosystems degradation and ensuring the sustainability of its work. The development of policy options needs to be the basis of all phases of any assessment – and indeed of all IPBES work.
Recommendation 17	The Plenary should establish a time-limited taskforce to examine the range of ways that assessments can be modernized, including ways to channel and enable effective engagement, as well as to examine new structures and ways of working (including through digital means).
Recommendation 18	IPBES needs to review its policy support function and the modalities for delivering on it.
Recommendation 19	IPBES needs to strengthen its work on knowledge and data to address gaps and ensure that IPBES work is cumulative.
Recommendation 20	The capacity-building function should be continued and enhanced to support the sustainability and long-term impact of IPBES. It should be tailored to its target audiences (e.g., policymakers and practitioners) and be a component of all IPBES functions.
Recommendation 21	IPBES should continue to strive to bring indigenous and local knowledge and other knowledge systems into all its work.
Recommendation 22	The task force on indigenous and local knowledge in its present form should be urgently reviewed.

Budget and financial arrangements

Recommendation 23	Annual commitments should be aligned with reliable income sources. The agreed work programme should be aligned with the available budget and prioritized as appropriate should short-term adjustments in the work programme be required.
Recommendation 24	IPBES should set a target for the reserves that should be maintained.
Recommendation 25	It may be prudent for IPBES to determine how much of the available budget should be allocated to the different components of the new work programme.
Recommendation 26	IPBES should initiate an internal discussion on how to regularize the income streams from nation States, especially as the intergovernmental nature of the

Budget and financial arrangements

	Platform makes it hard to attract non-governmental funding. This can be achieved through a formula-driven system (e.g., one based on gross domestic product (GDP) or on a combination of GDP and purchasing power parity) or an honour pledge system.
Recommendation 27	IPBES should incorporate a series of key financial health indicators (e.g., net assets, net operating ratio, operating reserve ratio and programme efficiency ratio) into its annual financial reporting systems and a liquidity assessment into its annual financial reviews in order to foster a culture of pursuing financial sustainability. Appropriate targets should be specified for each.
Recommendation 28	IPBES should determine an aspirational target to define how much of its annual budget should be earmarked for the work programme and how much should be allocated to the running of the platform and management functions – a 60%:40% split should be aspired to under ideal circumstances.
Recommendation 29	The risk of fatigue in the science community, especially of experienced assessment practitioners who receive little or no reward or recognition, needs to be addressed in some manner. IPBES should track in-kind contributions (secondments, scientists donating their time) and catalysed funding and report on them as part of the budget.
Recommendation 30	There is clearly a need to diversify the funding streams of IPBES – for example, through increased engagement with foundations, pension funds and the private sector. However, the review panel has found that the ongoing engagements between IPBES and the private/corporate sector are still too underdeveloped and would encourage IPBES to refocus on this issue to enhance its fundraising potential. This is a critical area of work for the Executive Secretary, with support from the Head of Development and Chair of the Platform.

Towards greater impact

Recommendation 31	Further improvements in communications could be achieved through more coverage on television and in other digital media, more placement of opinion pieces and more diversity among IPBES spokespersons. In future communications exercises resulting from assessments and other IPBES products, the key “faces” should be the experts in the subject, who often are best able to discuss results and to consider potential policy and biodiversity management implications, and, for the regional assessments, would have “local presence”.
Recommendation 32	IPBES needs to target its communication towards the primary goal of the Platform, which is to bring evidence to bear in decision-making and to ensure transformative change.
Recommendation 33	IPBES needs to define its pathways to influence policy more systematically and more strategically, recognizing that resources are needed to complete these tasks satisfactorily and that there are partnerships that can be leveraged.
Recommendation 34	The Platform, in partnership with FAO, UNDP, UNEP and UNESCO, should attempt to reach universal membership.
Recommendation 35	IPBES should put in place regular reviews and self-evaluations of its structures, processes and products.
Recommendation 36	During the next work programme, IPBES can strengthen its strategic design and implementation by reviewing, refreshing and/or making explicit the change logic or “theory of change” that underlies the design and implementation of IPBES. In order to support risk management, special attention has to be paid to the likely preconditions and key assumptions necessary for making progress towards and success in achieving the expected or desired impact.
