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2024

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

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Interview Summary

# The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)



**Established on:  
21 April, 2012**

**Secretariat Headquarters:  
Bonn (Germany)**

## **<The Foundation of IPBES and its major impetus>**

One of the major impetuses for the creation of IPBES was the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, published in 2005. It was the first major environmental assessment of global ecosystems to be carried out under the auspices of the United Nations, and was based on a large body of evidence from around the world. The report presented specific findings on biodiversity loss and the importance of ecosystem services. For example, it highlighted the negative impact on crops resulting from the decline of pollinators such as bees and other insects, and the significant contribution that nature and living organisms make to preventing soil erosion and providing fresh water. Until then, biodiversity had mainly been seen in terms of species conservation, such as “protecting the panda”. It was seen as a specific issue related to a few exotic species living in areas remote from centres of population. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment has helped people to understand the close connection between biodiversity and people, and has laid the groundwork for many people to become aware of the link between people and nature. However, as the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment was a one-off report, governments suggested that there should be a mechanism for the regular assessment of the environment, just as the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) publishes regular reports on climate change. This became a major driver for the establishment of the IPBES and the success of the IPCC has also been a source of inspiration for governments. The concept of establishing IPBES was not conceived by a single person, but there was a momentum for the establishment of an intergovernmental organization on environmental issues and the IPCC was used as a reference point. In

addition, the fact that the then French government, led by the President Jacques Chirac, secured funding for the consultative process to establish the body also helped to encourage its creation.



IPBES Germany (Bonn)

The consultation process to establish IPBES began in 2005 and it took about seven years until it was finally founded in 2012. This was the time needed to build an organization that brings together more than 190 countries around the world, involving scientists and all other stakeholders such as civil societies and non-governmental organizations, within a unified mechanism and in an inclusive and transparent way.

### **<The Activities of IPBES>**

IPBES aims to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and human well-being. Its objective is to produce reports that summarize the state of knowledge on biodiversity and its contribution, and options for action by different types of human actors to reverse the negative trends observed in biodiversity. With a mission to strengthen the science-policy interface, IPBES produces reports that provide information and evidence for policymakers, decisionmakers and those in positions of social influence on nature and the natural world, and of course, for those who need such information. It is important to note that IPBES does not make recommendations or suggestions to policy or decisionmakers. It is forbidden to steer them in a particular direction or to recommend specific plans. IPBES is a scientific body that must remain credible, independent and objective to provide the most current information on the science and evidence presented by the world's leading experts.

### **<Process for Preparing the Assessment Reports>**

The most important activity for IPBES is the preparation of the Assessment Report. Once a year, representatives of the member states meet to discuss the various tasks and programs of IPBES and what needs to be done, to approve its budget, etc. They also discuss the topics they would like to be addressed in the report. Once the Plenary Assembly decides on the topics for the reports, the work of producing a highly credible report begins. Themes for evaluation also stem from other decisions taken by member-states assembly of the Convention on Biological Diversity or other conventions related to biodiversity.

### **©Scientific Board (Experts)**

Once the topic of the Assessment has been decided, IPBES calls for experts to prepare the report. Governments and other institutions, such as universities, nominate individuals they consider suitable for that particular assessment, resulting in a list of thousands of candidates. A team called the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP), consisting of 25 members from member states, which is made up of five scientists selected from each of the five UN regions, then reviews the CVs of all nominated candidates and selects the members who will prepare the report. The selection is made according to the principles and values established by IPBES, such as regional balance, gender balance and the participation of scientists from different knowledge systems. The selected scientists receive no remuneration and are required to work on the report while continuing their own research and work. The IPBES Secretariat provides the best possible support to the scientists who volunteer their time and effort and ensures that their work runs as smoothly as possible.

### **©Use of Indigenous and Local People's Knowledge**

Indigenous and local people's knowledge is also taken into account in the preparation of the report. These people live closely connected to their local environment but have been at the forefront of the negative impacts of climate and environmental change. The knowledge and information they have developed is invaluable, as it includes elements that scientists may not have been able to observe. The assessment process usually involves several dialogues with different indigenous and local communities. Sitting around a table, the team explains the results from the research and asks them for their opinions. Local people sometimes share some relevant information with the team. The combination of western science and indigenous and local knowledge, which complement each other, makes the resulting IPBES reports more diverse and richer.

### **©Completion of the Report**

These selected experts meet over a period of about three years to produce the report, incorporating input from external reviews, national governments, and other stakeholders throughout the process. A series of peer reviews by other experts in the relevant field are carried out at various stages of the evaluation, suggesting additional papers that may have been overlooked or recommending a reconsideration of the content. The entire process to complete the assessment involves thousands of experts and the review of tens of thousands of scientific publications and other materials, resulting in a report of around 800 to 1,000 pages. The experts would then present their findings to the plenary and provide a summary report of 30 to 40 pages to policymakers. After making some necessary amendments in response to questions from the plenary, the Summary for Policymakers (SPM) is approved

and signed by national governments. The assessment report, which started as a scientific paper, officially becomes a policy document after this process. The transparency and diversity of the IPBES system, including the selection process of scientists and the incorporation of indigenous and local knowledge, facilitates the production of comprehensive and insightful reports of the highest quality.



### <Funding and the Number of Member States>

IPBES is primarily funded by voluntary contributions from its member states. The amount of the contribution is decided by each government and is managed transparently as a trust fund hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme. However, funding is often constrained and in a recent attempt they are trying to reach out to foundations and the private sector to help secure their funding.

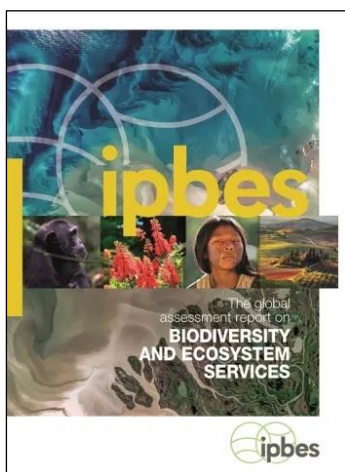
The number of IPBES's member states in 2012 at the time of its establishment was 94, which has increased to 147 members today. Member states can participate in decisions on the IPBES work program and topics, allowing them to express their views and requests on new topics of national and regional relevance, while non-member states can only observe what is being decided. One of the main reasons non-member countries, especially smaller or developing ones, may not join is that they lack sufficient resources to allocate enough personnel. Indeed, once the country becomes a member, many people, including governments, will be required to attend a number of meetings and provide comments on evaluation reports and so on. This can be quite demanding and some countries may not have sufficient resources to meet these requirements. IPBES therefore provides support to countries that need assistance, including various capacity-building activities and has recently been able to add four or five new countries each year. Its future goal is for all UN member states to join IPBES.

### <IPBES Reports>

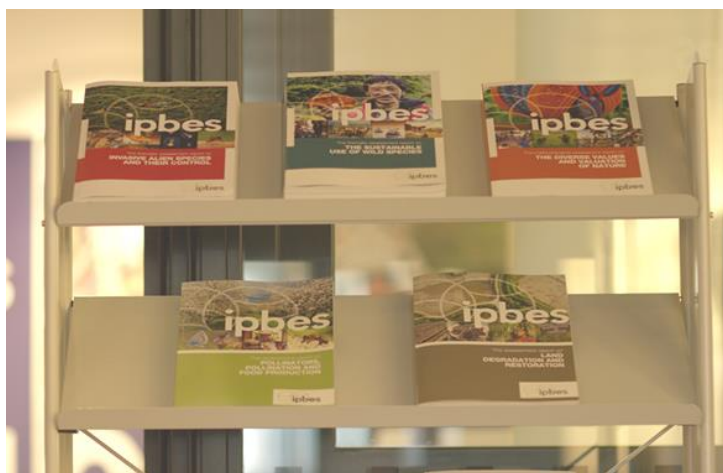
IPBES has published the following 11 reports since its establishment up to October 2024.

\* 2016 : Assessment Report on Pollinators, Pollination and Food Production

- \* 2016 : Scenarios and Models Assessment
- \* 2018 : Assessment Report on Land Degradation and Restoration
- \* 2018 : Regional Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services for Asia and the Pacific
- \* 2018 : Regional Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services for the Americas/Africa/Europe and Central Asia
- \* 2019 : IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
- \* 2020 : Workshop Report on IPBES Workshop on Biodiversity and Pandemics
- \* 2021 : Workshop Report on IPBES-IPCC Co-sponsored Workshop on Biodiversity and Climate Change
- \* 2022 : Assessment Report on the Sustainable Use of Wild Species
- \* 2022 : Assessment Report on Diverse Values and Valuation of Nature
- \* 2023 : Thematic Assessment Report on Invasive Alien Species and their Control



The Global Assessment Report



IPBES Assessment Reports

### ©Global Assessment Report

The Global Assessment of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services report published in 2019 was one of the most complex and large-scale reports that IPBES has worked on to date, containing many highly significant and groundbreaking findings. It highlighted the critical situation facing biodiversity on Earth, which the focus on climate change had previously overshadowed.

This Global Assessment had some landmark aspects, for example, while previous publications have largely focused on documenting the negative situations in nature, this report identified five key actions by people that have directly contributed to the decline in biodiversity. The first one was the alteration of land-use including deforestation; the second was the excessive exploitation of terrestrial resources and overfishing in marine areas; the

third was climate change accelerated by human action; the fourth was all forms of pollution including pesticides and fertilisers used in agriculture; and the last was invasive alien species. It also provided a series of options for action to improve the state of biodiversity, categorised by their areas of expertise. This included options for those engaged in fisheries, supply chain management in business, or the financial sector, among others. Furthermore, the report also included new figures which raised awareness and concern among the general public.

For example, the report presented that one million out of the approximately eight million species of plants and animals are threatened with extinction, many of which could disappear within a decade. The report also revealed that over 70% of global freshwater resources have been depleted since the Industrial Revolution; and that only 3% of the entire ocean can be considered pristine, with the rest being either excessively polluted or overfished. The report also examined the impact of nature's declining contribution on people's quality of life, noting that the quality in the majority of areas is also declining. It also highlighted the links between global inequality and environmental issues, stating that these issues cannot be addressed without correcting the imbalance, particularly the overconsumption in wealthy countries, which is considered one of the key underlying drivers of biodiversity loss. The Global Assessment Report provided a comprehensive overview of the issues related to the natural environment, addressing all aspects.

### © The Value of Biodiversity

Another publication in 2022, 'Assessment Report on Diverse Values and Valuation of Nature', addressed the multiple values of biodiversity. The objective was to ascertain the way people value biodiversity and understand the connections between people and nature in various forms. The assessment revealed that there are many more values beyond the material or instrumental values that humans often associate with nature. It concluded that most decisions regarding nature were largely influenced by a materialistic perspective which often overlooks the emotional aspects and lived experiences of people in relation to nature. The assessment presented four general perspectives, which are: 1) living from nature, 2) living with nature, 3) living in nature and 4) living as nature. The first perspective, 'living from nature,' views nature primarily as a provider for humans. However, all values of nature must be considered equally. The second perspective, 'living with nature,' focuses on the lives of non-human beings. It reflects the understanding that people share the planet with other forms of life. The third perspective, 'living in nature,' emphasizes the importance of our connection to nature, as it provides a sense of belonging and identity. Lastly, 'living as nature' sees the natural world as an integral part of one's physical, mental, and spiritual self. In fact, a significant proportion of the global population—beyond just indigenous communities—shares this sense of connection.

## ©Climate Change and Biodiversity

The publication of the 2019 Global Assessment Report has sparked an unprecedented level of interest in biodiversity from many countries. Additionally, the business community, which has focused almost exclusively on climate change when it comes to environmental issues, has become much more engaged in biodiversity issues. Amid this shift in awareness, IPBES has long advocated for something it now feels the need to emphasize even more. That is understanding and addressing the correlation between climate change and biodiversity. Communities working on biodiversity have a good understanding of climate change and its impacts, but the reverse is not yet well understood. Measures designed to address climate change can also have an unintended negative impact on biodiversity. Therefore, greater attention must be given to this issue. There are solutions that benefit both climate change and biodiversity, known as 'nature-based solutions' (NbS), should be actively promoted. For example, optimising forest management can help address climate change by increasing carbon dioxide absorption, while also benefiting biodiversity through the protection of forest ecosystems. Nevertheless, large-scale plantation-type afforestation and the cultivation of biofuel crops to replace fossil fuels can negatively impact biodiversity. Therefore, climate mitigation measures may have adverse effects on natural ecosystems. Plantation afforestation and the cultivation of biofuel crops are, however, common climate change countermeasures today due to their scalability and the benefits they offer. The current imbalance can be attributed to the fact that climate change is considered a key priority and has received far more attention compared to other issues in nature. Therefore, it is vital that more people understand the interconnectedness of climate change, biodiversity, and food security.





### **<The Impact of IPBES Reports>**

The 2019 Global Assessment Report had a significant global impact. At the Davos conference held after its release, biodiversity loss was highlighted as a business risk factor for the very first time. Since then, biodiversity loss has been included every year among the top five business risk factors.

Furthermore, at the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity in December 2022, there have been numerous references to the IPBES Global Assessment Report in the new global biodiversity framework called the 'Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework'. The COP15 established a series of biodiversity targets for governments to achieve by 2030. These targets were set for each of the five major direct drivers of biodiversity loss identified in the Global Assessment Report, with some targets even including specific figures. Another example is that the Japanese government initiated a review of the legislation on invasive alien species in light of findings presented in the 2023 'Thematic Assessment Report on Invasive Alien Species and their Control'. Such legislative action by countries to protect biodiversity in response to IPBES align with one of IPBES's key objectives.

### **<Upcoming Reports To Be Published>**

Two new reports are scheduled to be presented at the upcoming Plenary in Namibia in December 2024. One of the reports, called the Nexus Assessment Report, examines the interlinkages between food, water, health, biodiversity, and climate change. The concept of this report is to move away from a siloed approach, which can lead to unintended consequences in other areas. The objective is to identify solutions that are beneficial to as many elements as possible without causing harm to others. This assessment project has been a collaborative effort involving approximately 150 scientists over a period of three years. The other report, called the Transformative Change Assessment Report, identifies strategies for a genuine transformation of the society to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals outlined in the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The report argues that a comprehensive transformation is necessary, including changes to our behaviour, technology and patterns of consumption and production. It suggests that minor adjustments are insufficient and that a more radical approach is needed.

In 2025, an assessment report on business and biodiversity is scheduled to be published. The report will assess the impact on and dependence of all types of business on nature, including mining, agribusiness and the financial sector. The objective is to frame the extent to which business relies on biodiversity and in the ways it impacts biodiversity. The report has brought together experts from various sectors, including science, the private sector,

business and industry, to discuss the capabilities, options and methods for protecting and restoring biodiversity resources.

Another recent initiative is a report on biodiversity monitoring. This is not just aimed at the business community, but is intended for everyone. It is a report on techniques for measuring biodiversity, designed to assist those who need to implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework agreed upon at COP15. There is a wide range of techniques available today for measuring biodiversity. In addition to the ground-based measurements, new techniques are being developed utilizing satellite, DNA, and even sound in water to detect species. IPBES assesses these monitoring possibilities, which may not have existed 10 to 15 years ago, to assist governments and other relevant bodies monitor biodiversity trends and enhance their monitoring capabilities.



Dr. Anne Larigauderie, Executive Secretary of IPBES

**<Message from Dr. Anne Larigauderie, Executive Secretary of IPBES>**

*If people understand that they hold the fate of biodiversity in their own hands, they can take various actions to support biodiversity through the choices they make daily. They can act as consumers by choosing to consume less, for example, or reducing their meat intake or opting for more plant-based proteins. They can act through the education they provide to their children, fostering a stronger connection to nature. They can act as voters and citizens through the choices they make when elected officials in democracies. They should essentially view everything they do through the lens of their connection with nature. And if they do so, I believe there is a bright future for all of us. Eventually, we will have the nature we deserve, and the state of nature will be proportional to the efforts that we are all willing to invest in it.*

\*This extract consists of interviews with Dr. Anne Larigauderie, Executive Director; Mr. Robert Spaul, Head of Communications; Dr. Simone Schiele, Head of Work Programme; Mr. Benedict Aboki Omare, Information Systems Officer, at IPBES headquarters in Bonn, Germany, in August 2024.