Consultation with Governments and Partners on an

Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

This note was prepared by UNEP and France upon an invitation included in the Statement adopted by the Steering Committee of the IMOSEB process of consultation (Montpellier, Nov. 2007); it is based on consultations with the MA and IMOSEB networks of experts.

CONCEPT NOTE

AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL SCIENCE-POLICY PLATFORM ON BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

Building on the global strategy for follow-up to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) and the consultative process towards an International Mechanism of Scientific Expertise on Biodiversity (IMoSEB)

Executive Summary

This draft concept note responds to the final meeting of the multi-stakeholder international steering committee for the consultative process initiated by the Government of France on an International Mechanism of Scientific Expertise on Biodiversity (IMoSEB). The steering group invited the Executive Director of UNEP in collaboration with the government of France, other governments and other partners to convene an intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting to consider an intergovernmental mechanism for biodiversity and ecosystem services. This concept note was developed by the United Nations Environment Programme in close consultation with the Government of France and a number of experts in their individual capacities[1].

The aim of this concept note is to support consultations with governments and partners in the lead up to such an inter-governmental and multi-stakeholder meeting tentatively scheduled for late 2008. It is envisaged that this concept note would constitute the basis for the documentation of the meeting.

The concept note builds primarily on the MA follow-up initiative and the

[1] See Annex One for the list of experts>

outcomes of the IMoSEB consultative process, but also draws on lessons learned from IPCC, GEO and IAASTD, as well as ongoing networking and capacity building initiatives.

It is envisaged that the overarching benefit of an intergovernmental science-policy platform is increased support to multiple actors at multiple scales for mitigation and adaptation to unprecedented changes in biodiversity and ecosystem services. The main deliverable would be improved policy-relevant information from all relevant sources about the state, trends and outlooks of human-environment interactions, with focus on the impacts of ecosystem change on human well-being. In addition, the science-policy platform would provide decision-makers with support in the development of tools and methodologies to translate knowledge for policy-making.

It is suggested that the benefits outlined above could be obtained through a phased approach. The modalities for the first phase (Phase I) should be agreed at the intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting. Activities in this phase would be conducted over a four-year timeframe under the auspices of a light operational and scientific oversight structure, with a geographically, gender and disciplinarily balanced composition, and with clear terms of reference. The activities for the second phase (Phase II) over a second four-year time period would be determined by an evaluation of the first phase and the demand expressed by members.

Overcoming Barriers to Development*: The world is witnessing unprecedented losses of biodiversity and ecosystem services, which are impacting human well-being and sustainable development. The future development of all countries will be impaired if these losses are not reversed, especially for developing countries in their fight to reduce poverty*[2]*. Public and private actors therefore need to mitigate and adapt to changes in biodiversity and ecosystem services. Such efforts are, however, knowledge intensive and need to be supported by a dynamic science–policy platform which has credibility, saliency and legitimacy.*

I. Background: Unprecedented losses in biodiversity and ecosystem services

1. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) showed that, over the last 50 years, humanity has caused losses in biodiversity and declines in ecosystem services which are unprecedented in history. In fact, 60% of the 24 assessed ecosystem services are in decline, and further degradation is expected if immediate action is not taken.

2. Scientific knowledge on the links among biodiversity, ecosystem services and human well-being, although not complete, has increased significantly since the completion of the MA. However, there is a need for a stronger international science-policy platform to allow emerging scientific knowledge to be translated into concrete policy action at all levels.

3. The current science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services is comprised of a number of national and international mechanisms and processes. The biodiversity and ecosystem-related multilateral environmental agreements, for example, contain a number of provisions on scientific and technical cooperation. However, the contribution of these scientifically credible processes to policy-making at all levels could be further strengthened if they are supported by credible, legitimate and salient emerging scientific findings and recommendations which are provided by an intergovernmental science-policy platform.

4. The consultation towards an International Mechanism for Scientific Expertise on Biodiversity (IMoSEB) and the global strategy on MA follow-up both demonstrate a growing demand for such an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services.

5. This concept paper is intended to support consultations with governments and partners on an intergovernmental science-policy platform. The paper explores the

rationale and modalities for such a science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services. In doing so it draws not only from the MA and IMoSEB processes, but also from lessons learned from global processes like the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), GEO (Global Environmental Outlook), IAASTD (International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development) and national processes like the Brazilian science-policy platform as well as ongoing networking and capacity building initiatives.

II. Rationale: Harvesting the benefits of an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services

6. The overarching benefits of an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services are:

a) Increased support to the multilateral environmental agreements and to other multilateral agreements affected by biodiversity and ecosystem services changes at all levels;

b) Provide the scientific basis to achieve better coordination and coherence among the various biodiversity and ecosystems-related multilateral environmental agreements

c) Provide scientific support to national governments concerned about the local consequences of biodiversity and ecosystem changes.

d) Provide credibility, salience and legitimacy to the science supporting the multilateral agreements, intergovernmental organizations and national governments

e) Ensure the quality and quantity of information flows to support decision-makers at appropriate levels.

7. Specific recommendations from the MA follow-up partners and the IMoSEB consultation for the intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services include:

a) ***Influence the Scientific Research Agenda***: inform and support, in association with requests of the global change programs, for a scientific program of research to better understand and predict the causes and consequences of changes in the biosphere at the global scale;

b) ***Generating the Knowledge***: undertake regular independent assessments of

changes in the biosphere at multiple scales;

c) ***Policy Support***: respond to requests from multilateral agreements, intergovernmental organizations and/or national governments for information and decision-support on specific issues;

d) ***Horizon Scanning***: proactively alert such organizations to emerging issues and threats in order to allow timely responses and provide rapid assessments of these threats;

e) ***Capacity Building***: support international action to build the capacity to undertake regular monitoring and assessment of changes in biodiversity and ecosystem services at the national level;

8. The science-policy platform should be structured such that the credibility, salience, and legitimacy are ensured by:

a) Independence;

b) Responsiveness to user needs;

c) A governance structure that includes the multilateral agreements, the intergovernmental organizations and national governments.

9. The science-policy platform would generate a range of outcomes, including:

(a) Promotion of dialogue among diverse knowledge systems and understandings, perspectives and values regarding biodiversity and ecosystem services, to help make policy decisions more effective, efficient and equitable;

(b) Improved communication to aid understanding and application of scientific results on biodiversity and ecosystem services by all relevant audiences;

(c) Support to the subsidiary advisory bodies of MEAs, national governments, civil society, development agencies, multilateral banks and the GEF by providing proactive scientific advice on existing and emerging threats.

(d) Identification of biodiversity and ecosystem services research priorities and gaps implied by decision-makers' concerns at all levels, and promotion/diffusion of these to the scientific community and the science funding agencies.

(e) Provide decision-makers at all levels with appropriate tools and methodologies to turn assessment findings (knowledge) about biodiversity and ecosystem services losses into action, in an effective, efficient and equitable manner.

III. The proposal: A phased approach for implementing the activities of the intergovernmental science-policy platform.

10. It is suggested that the specific activities of the intergovernmental science-policy platform should be phased, and performance should be evaluated in each phase. The first inter-governmental meeting tentatively planned to be held in the last quarter of 2008 should approve both the phasing of activities, and the objectives associated with each phase.

11. The overarching objective of Phase I is to provide timely, authoritative, independent, credible, inclusive, internationally peer-reviewed and policy-relevant scientific advice on the state, trends and outlooks of the human-environment interactions, with a focus on emerging issues and the short- and long-term impacts of changes in biodiversity and ecosystem services on human well-being.

IV. Key components of Phase I

12. Influencing the Research Agenda. Phase I will support the global change programs of the Earth System Science Partnership (ESSP), DIVERSITAS in particular, and key research funding agencies in the identification of research needs and programmes. This will include advancing understanding of the dynamic interactions among global drivers of change, ecosystem services, biodiversity, and human well-being at multiple scales.

Objective: Continue to build and improve the knowledge base on the links between biodiversity, ecosystem functioning, ecosystem services and human well-being, and develop tools for mainstreaming ecosystem services into development and economic decision-making.

Key Activities:

1. Establish a multidisciplinary group of experts to identify key gaps in knowledge and data, to design a research agenda, and to influence the priorities of research and development aid funding agencies.
2. Develop a set of robust set of targets that build upon the 2010 biodiversity targets for 2020 to be presented at the Convention of Biological Diversity Conference of Parties meeting in Nagoya in 2010.

13. Generating the Knowledge through Sub-Global Assessments. A key component of the global strategy for MA follow-up is the mobilization and facilitation of sub-global assessments (SGAs). Phase I will provide support for existing SGAs, as well as for the sharing of lessons learned and experiences among ongoing SGAs. It will also initiate additional SGAs according to the ecosystem services framework provided by the MA, with an emphasis on ecosystems and regions not well-covered by the original and ongoing set of MA SGAs. This component will primarily respond to needs and requests from individual governments and biodiversity relevant MEAs and other bodies for help in developing the policy-relevant information base and establishing baselines on the links among biodiversity, ecosystem services and human well-being.

Objective: Additional support catalyzed for existing sub-global assessments and initiating new sub-global assessments based on the MA framework, with an emphasis on ecosystems and regions not well-covered by the existing set of sub-global assessments.

Key Activities:

1. Support and initiate policy-driven sub-global assessments in close cooperation with national governments and regional bodies, including undertaking economic valuations and scenarios development focused on supporting policy-making processes.
2. A clearing house mechanism to be established to facilitate information exchange among sub-global assessments.

14. Policy Support. Phase I will harness networks of scientific experts across natural and social science disciplines to provide decision-makers with timely responses to queries on biodiversity and ecosystem change, and provide policy and decision support where requested. This will include methodologies for the economic analysis of trade-offs among ecosystem services based on monetary and non-monetary valuation of ecosystem services, as well as tools for integrating assessment findings into development and economic planning and budgetary processes, programs and policies at the national level.

Objective: Promote the systematic application of ecosystem service considerations, including improved ecosystem services management for increasing resilience to climate change in development strategies and strengthening the basis for adaptation in public, civil society and private sector decision-making.

Key Activities:

1. Build understanding and promote learning for the application of the ecosystem service framework by government and civil society. Activities could focus on the following:
    a. Design and implementation of intervention responses based on outcomes of sub-global assessments and mainstreaming them into regional, national and sub-national development planning and implementation processes;
    b. Building the capacity of ministries of finance to include budgetary appropriations for investment in ecological infrastructure;
    c. Strengthening local rights and community involvement in management of and decision-making pertaining to ecosystem services;
    d. Promoting and supporting the involvement of users in the development of tools and methodologies.
2. Promote pro-poor economic and financial incentives for sustaining ecosystem services, including the promotion of taxation mechanisms, payment for ecosystem services schemes and other market mechanisms, and elimination of distorting subsidies, including by undertaking pilot projects in close collaboration with the policy-driven sub-global assessments

15. Horizon-scanning and Awareness. Phase I will monitor, evaluate and communicate information on emerging issues in the science of biodiversity and ecosystem service change. These would include general alerts disseminated to the multilateral environmental agreements, UN bodies, national governments and others, and targeted policy briefs to the agencies specifically affected by particular issues.

Objective: Identify and report on emerging issues that have the potential of causing significant impacts on biodiversity, ecosystem services and human well-being.

Key Activities:

1. Produce a report on the existing food security and bio-fuels debate to guide policymaking on both issues.

16. Capacity Building. There are on-going efforts to build capacity all levels on understanding the links between biodiversity, ecosystem services and human well-being. Phase I will contribute to these efforts by building capacity for undertaking SGAs, integrating the monetary and non-monetary values of biodiversity and ecosystem

services into national accounts, disseminating decision-support tools and methods, and including younger national scientists in particular from developing countries within the activities of the intergovernmental science-policy platform.

Objective: To build the capacity of scientists at the national level to support decision making with credible, salient and legitimate scientific support.

Key Activities:

1. Building on the Brazilian experience, build and strengthen national science-policy platforms in selected countries.

2. Establish a young fellows program within the global science-policy platform where young scientists from developing countries are given the opportunities to participate in the activities of the science-policy patform.

V. Modalities for implementing Phase I

17. The proposed structure and dynamics of Phase I are illustrated in Figure 1 and outlined below.

18. Kickoff meeting, fourth quarter 2008. An initial intergovernmental meeting scheduled for the fourth quarter of 2008 can agree on the modalities, objectives, scope, principles and procedures of Phase I. It is proposed that the meeting be co-chaired by a prominent scientist and a prominent policy-maker, chosen in a manner which takes into account the need for geographical and gender balance. Deliberations will be based on this concept paper and a draft statement.

19. Key operating principles for Phase I. It is proposed that Phase I should be:

a) Flexible, intergovernmental but also include non-governmental stakeholders, and build upon existing networks of scientists and knowledge-holders;
b) Scientifically independent, credible, inclusive, and subject to critical expert peer review as appropriate;
c) Responsive to policy needs as identified by decision-making organs at multiple scales, including biodiversity-related MEAs, by being legitimate and policy-relevant without being policy prescriptive;
d) Linked to relevant assessment processes such as IPCC and GEO;
e) Monitored from the outset with procedures for measuring its effectiveness.

20. Operational structure. It is proposed that the structure for Phase I be comprised of an Operational Steering Group, a Scientific Steering Group, and a Secretariat. The structure should be light with a geographically, gender and disciplinarily balanced composition, with clear terms of reference (see below).

21. Timeframe. Phase I is suggested to span four years from 2008 to 2012. An evaluation of Phase I will allow for possible adjustments after the first four years.

22. Procedures. It is suggested that the procedures guiding activities in Phase I draw lessons from existing processes such as the IPCC, MA, IAASTD and be approved by the initial intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting. (see Annex *Two*)

23. Operational Steering Group. It is proposed that the Operational Steering Group be co-chaired by a prominent scientist and a prominent policy maker chosen in a manner which takes into account the need for geographic and gender balance. The Operational Steering Group will be composed of government-nominated representatives, representatives from civil society including scientific organizations and private sector, and ex-officio members from UN bodies and MEAs, and be composed in a geographically and gender balanced manner. The terms of reference of the group would include:

a) Oversee the implementation of Phase 1 according to the principles and procedures agreed at the intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting;

b) Consider and approve, based on inputs from Scientific Steering Group as appropriate:

- Additional procedures as needed;
- Expert nominations, identification of co-sponsors and donors, and partnership arrangements for the implementation of Phase I;
- Budget and work programme for Phase I, and financial reports prepared by the Secretariat;

c) Consider findings arising out of sub-global assessments, rapid assessments of emerging issues and observations and information networking, which may require action by governments, international organizations and civil society.

d) Consider the possible scope, process and parameters for conducting a comprehensive global assessment in Phase II, based on the recommendations of the Scientific Steering Group.

24. Scientific Steering Group. It is proposed that the Scientific Steering Group be limited in size and be composed of prominent scientific experts chosen in a regionally, gender and disciplinary balanced manner which reflect the need to also take into account traditional knowledge. The terms of reference of the group would include:

a) Ensure scientific and technical credibility of all activities under Phase I, including the nomination and selection of scientific experts for programme activities;

b) Guide the development of tools, guidelines and methodologies for sub-global and global assessments, networking, capacity building, outreach and policy support;

c) Promote the use of existing scientific, assessment and information networks and support the further development of such networks;

d) Oversee the nomination of experts for conducting such assessments in accordance with the procedures agreed for Phase I;

e) Identify emerging problems, information gaps and research needs and issue alerts relating to biodiversity and ecosystems as needed;

f) Develop recommendations for the scope, process and parameters for conducting a comprehensive global assessment in Phase II for the consideration of the Operational Steering Group;

g) Provide scientific advice and input to the Operational Steering Group as and when needed.

25. Secretariat. It is envisaged that Phase I will be supported by a partnership of co-sponsoring agencies in accordance with guidelines set out by the Operational Steering Group. Activities under Phase I will be supported through joint programming by partners and a separate trust fund. A multi-year work programme approved by the Operational Steering Group will be coordinated by the Secretariat, based on the key components and outcomes of Phase I described above. An estimate of the financial costs and expected in-kind contribution for the activities of phase I is attached in Annex Three.

VI. Consideration of Phase II

26. The Operational Steering Group (see below) may request the Secretariat to convene intermediate intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder consultations within the

timeframe of Phase I to:

(i) Review the accomplishments of Phase I and consider if adjustments to the modalities or governance structure are needed;

(ii) Consider the need for continuation or modification of Phase I activities beyond the first four-year timeframe; and

(iii) Consider the scope and modalities of a comprehensive global assessment, in preparation for Phase II. Findings of any such assessment should also be subject to the consideration (approval/endorsement/acceptance) of an intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder consultation at later stage.

27. It is envisaged that a final intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting of Phase I will be convened with the aim to consider the effectiveness of Phase I, and the need and modalities for a Phase II. The evaluation should be initiated and completed in time for consideration by governments and partners prior to this final meeting.

Fig 1. Modalities of Phase I