



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**Brussels, 20 March 2013**

**7528/1/13  
REV 1**

**ENV        219  
ONU        23**

**NOTE**

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from:            General Secretariat  
to:                Delegations

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Subject:        International Meetings and Events  
                  Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)  
                  (Bonn, 21-26 January 2013)  
                  -        Information from the Presidency and the Commission

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Delegations will find attached an information note on the above, submitted jointly by the Presidency and the Commission, to be dealt with under "other business" at the meeting of the Council (Environment) on 21 March 2013.

**First plenary meeting of the Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and  
Ecosystem Services (IPBES)  
(Bonn, 21-26 January 2013)**

**- Information from the Presidency and the Commission -**

The first plenary meeting of the Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES1) took place in Bonn on 21-26 January. The meeting was well attended with 13 Member States (Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom) attending as members of the platform and two others (Lithuania and Poland) as well as Croatia and the European Commission attending as observers.

The EU had two objectives ahead of the meeting, namely to enable IPBES to commence its work and to achieve full membership of IPBES for the EU.

The first objective was achieved, with the election of the Chair, Bureau and Multidisciplinary Expert Panel. A decision was made on the operation of the Secretariat, which will be based in Bonn. The 2013 budget was agreed. Progress was also made on the initial work programme for IPBES with further consideration and development in the period up to the next plenary, scheduled for the end of 2013.

In relation to the objective of EU membership, on the basis of an EU common position on the agreement at COREPER level on 16 January 2013 the EU presented proposed Rules of Procedure to enable the full participation of Regional Economic Integrated Organisations and held discussions with other members in order to clarify the implications of membership. While some limited progress was made, consensus could not be reached and it was decided to return to this issue at the next plenary meeting. The matter should be further considered during the intersessional period with a view to resolving it, i.e. ensuring full REIO/EU membership by the second Plenary meeting scheduled for the end of this year.

## **Election of Officers**

Vice-Chairs and Bureau Members were elected at the opening session and, following negotiations during the week, Mr. Zakri Abdul Hamid of Malaysia was elected as Chair. It was the understanding of the meeting that the Vice-Chair of the "Western Europe and Other" Group would become the Chair of the Bureau for the next term.

## **Rules of Procedure**

Following work in a contact group which was held throughout the week agreement was reached on the vast majority of the Rules of Procedure for IPBES, including on operation of the Plenary and Bureau, as well as voting procedures.

On the issue of REIO/EU membership, the EU presented proposed text in accordance with the parameters agreed at COREPER and held discussions with other members in order to clarify the intentions around membership. A number of states, most notably the US, were opposed to REIO membership if it conferred the right to a block vote exceeding the number of member states present at the meeting. The US was unwilling to engage in substantive bilateral discussions on the matter. It clearly emerged from subsequent discussions that overcoming the current blockage will require addressing the issue bilaterally with the U.S.

The US delegation also put forward at the last minute alternative text, which made the issue specifically about the EU rather than REIOs. Following some discussions it was decided to return to this issue at the next plenary meeting with some further consideration during the intersessional period. Therefore high-level, coordinated outreach to the U.S. is a priority ahead of the next plenary session.

While agreement was reached on most of the draft procedures on admitting observers, disagreement on the issue of Members objecting to the admittance of observers led to much debate on the matter. It was agreed that the issue would be returned to at the next session of Plenary. However, this meant that interim arrangements for admitting observers at the next session were required; these were duly agreed.

## **Initial Work Programme**

The representatives discussed various issues around the preparation of the initial work programme and the institutional arrangements that may be required to support its implementation. On the question of the next steps required for the preparation of the work programme, participants identified a number of issues as being particularly important. These included: ensuring an appropriate balance across the four functions of the Platform; reducing potential bureaucracy in procedures; clarifying the respective roles of the Bureau and the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel in a number of activities; and the urgent need for further work on the conceptual framework. In particular, participants agreed that a clear process was needed for the next intersessional period to ensure that the second session of the Plenary could take the necessary decisions for the beginning of the implementation of the work programme, including the adoption of a conceptual framework.

## **Multi-Disciplinary Expert Panel**

With respect to the role of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel in overseeing the development of the initial work programme during the intersessional period, there was general agreement on the need to set priorities, the need for the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel to develop its own working methods with the support of the secretariat, and the need for the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel to retain its independence. The members of the Panel were also duly elected, including two EU representatives (Ms. Eva Roth (Denmark) and Mr. Paul Leadley (France)) among the five WEOG members and two EU representatives (Mr. György Pataki and Mr. András Báldi (Hungary)) among the five Eastern European members.

## **Institutional Arrangements**

There was general support for UNEP to take the lead in the administration of the secretariat. It was proposed by many delegates that the four United Nations organizations should participate in the implementation of the Platform's work programme. In addition, Governments urged the United Nations organizations to second staff to the IPBES secretariat.

In addition, the Plenary considered the link between the Platform and the United Nations system. Representatives were generally of the view that the Plenary should further develop arrangements with UNEP, UNESCO, FAO and UNDP for facilitating the functioning of the Platform and to consider this matter at its second session. It was also decided to further consider the links between the Platform and the United Nations system.

### **Financial Arrangements**

Draft financial Procedures for the Platform were presented by the secretariat and opened for discussion. Considering the fact that the financial procedures of the Platform will need to be aligned with the rules and procedures to be used for the administration of the trust fund of the Platform by the organization that will be entrusted with such administration, the Plenary decided to further consider and finalize financial procedures for the Platform at its next session on the basis of discussions at its first session.

The representatives also discussed the various issues around the Budget for the Platform, on the basis of information contained in the initial budget requirements for the administration and implementation of the Platform. Representatives were largely of the view that there should be a lean, efficient secretariat with some suggesting a step-by-step approach to building the secretariat, responding to the development of the work programme. The representatives also welcomed the intention of a secondment by the United Nations Environment Programme, and encouraged the other United Nations organizations to likewise consider such secondments.

A number of Member States made pledges of support for IPBES and the European Union noted that it will be in a position to provide further financial support upon its acceptance as a member of the Platform.