

MEDIA ADVISORY

IPBES's first steps, big steps for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services First meeting of newly established IPBES

Bonn, 15 January 2013- The first session of the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES-1) will be held in Bonn, Germany from 21 to 26 January 2013, hosted by the Government of Germany.

IPBES was established last year (April 2012) in Panama City. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is acting as the interim Secretariat of IPBES in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) until such time a permanent secretariat is set up in Bonn.

IPBES-1 will be the first meeting of Members of the Platform's plenary, with observers. The Platform is an independent intergovernmental body open to all member countries of the United Nations.

The members are committed to building IPBES as the leading intergovernmental body for assessing the state of the planet's biodiversity, its ecosystems and the essential services they provide to society.

The Bonn meeting will aim to agree on the remaining rules of procedures for the platform, elect Bureau and Multidisciplinary Expert Panel members, and agree on the next steps by which the IPBES work programme can become operational as soon as possible.

Biodiversity from terrestrial, marine, coastal, and inland water ecosystems provides the basis for ecosystems and the services they provide that underpin human well-being. However, biodiversity and ecosystem services are declining at an unprecedented rate and the world failed to reach the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target of a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010.

Alarming figures from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Global Environment Outlook-5 (GEO-5) include:

- The world lost over 100 million hectares of forest from 2000 to 2005, and has lost 20 percent of its seagrass and mangrove habitats since 1970 and 1980 respectively.

- In some regions, 95 percent of wetlands have been lost. Two-thirds of the world's largest rivers are now moderately to severely fragmented by dams and reservoirs.
- Vertebrate populations have declined on average by 30 percent since 1970; around 20 per cent of vertebrate species are now under threat.
- The extinction risk is increasing faster for corals than for any other group of living organisms, with the condition of coral reefs declining by 38 percent since 1980. Rapid contraction is projected by 2050.

In order to address these challenges, adequate local, national and international policies need to be adopted and implemented. To achieve this, decision makers need scientifically credible and independent information that takes into account the complex relationships between biodiversity, ecosystem services, and people. They also need effective methods to interpret this scientific information in order to make informed decisions. The scientific community also needs to understand the needs of decision makers better in order to provide them with the relevant information. In essence, the dialogue between the scientific community, governments, and other stakeholders on biodiversity and ecosystem services needs to be strengthened.

IPBES was established to this end. It provides a mechanism recognized by both the scientific and policy communities to synthesize, review, assess and critically evaluate relevant information and knowledge generated worldwide by governments, academia, scientific organizations, non-governmental organizations and indigenous communities. This involves a credible group of experts in conducting assessments of such information and knowledge in a transparent way.

IPBES is unique in that it will aim to strengthen capacity for the effective use of science in decision-making at all levels. IPBES will also aim to address the needs of Multilateral Environmental Agreements that are related to biodiversity and ecosystem services, and build on existing processes ensuring synergy and complementarities in each other's work.

More information on IPBES is available at: www.ipbes.net

Also see the resources page at: www.ipbes.net/resources

Members of the media are invited to attend the opening ceremony of the meeting attended by:

- M. Peter Altmaier, Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Germany
- Lord Mayor Jürgen Nimptsch, Federal City of Bonn, Germany
- M. Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director.
- Ms. Gretchen Kalonji, Assistant Director General for Natural Sciences, UNESCO

- M. Alexander Müller, Assistant Director General, Natural Resources Management and Environment Department, FAO

Time: 10:00 am – 01:00 pm, Monday 21 January 2013

Venue: Venue: World Conference Center Bonn, (Bonn) Germany

Please allow enough time to enter the building due to increased security conditions.

A press release will be produced following the end of the meeting on 27 January.

To confirm attendance and for further information please contact:

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