

Comments on the draft for Rules of Procedure for the platform's plenary

These are comments provided by the Society for Conservation Biology. We are an international professional organization dedicated to promoting the scientific study of the phenomena that affect the maintenance, loss, and restoration of biological diversity and therefore see ourselves as a logical partner to IPBES.

General comments

This draft for rules of procedure provides only procedures for plenary meetings and does not address the most critical issues related to governance of IPBES. To solve the governance of IPBES a larger set of procedural rules needs to be established. These are critical since they will dictate the role of independent science in IPBES and hence also relate to the need to establish a sense of common ownership and responsibility for the scientific community. Without this, IPBES will risk not getting the most relevant and best qualified experts contributing to its work.

Inclusion of independent science in the governance structure

The draft assumes that a Bureau is to be established with only 5 members (Chair and vice-chairs). Based on the discussion at the first plenary session, no decision on how a Bureau should be composed was taken. This relates to the whole governance structure of IPBES and the IPCC model with an extended Bureau with a larger set of experts elected should also be considered. This was suggested during government interventions in Nairobi. Therefore, SCB suggests that the rules of procedure require that the scientific community outside of governments have representatives at each level, including but not limited to an extended Bureau, and every other subgroup of the Plenary or Secretariat. These representatives should be nominated by the scientific and professional societies composed of those with expertise in biodiversity and ecosystem conservation, restoration and the integration of that knowledge into policy and the economy (i.e. belonging to the UN Major group "Scientific and Technological Community"). In each phase such representatives should constitute an equal percentage of the body as the number of representatives of governments and should be able to vote in each phase except in the plenary when it is operating as the formal plenary. Given that transparency and accountability are essential for the advancement of science in any realm, and especially IPBES, non-government or professional society representatives should be represented in the plenary as observers with the right to speak succinctly to each point after government representatives have spoken.

Other critical elements of the overall Rules of Procedures for IPBES that are missing

- How assessments and reports should be handled by the Plenary. Here the IPCC language of "accepting, adopting and approving" should be considered. This opens for flexibility in terms of reaching strong policy support (approval

of executive summaries) and independent science (acceptance of major reports).

- We also suggest that the report abstracts and executive summaries be prepared in lay-persons' language and in language that speaks to policy measures using the terms of those policy measures, laws or regulations.
- How concurring or minority opinions should be reflected when the science is not settled. Here we suggest that each full report and table of contents include any relevant concurring or minority opinion, citing substantial peer reviewed evidence in support of its position with access to the procedures and data supporting that position and reviews thereof.
- The rules of procedure should require that each report spell out the precautionary approaches that are relevant in light of the extent of any uncertainty and the relative risks, costs, and benefits of such action or inaction.
- A process for nomination and election of members in the subsidiary bodies and working groups should be established. It is likely that election of individual experts should be decided by the plenary, but it should be possible for stakeholders in general and scientific organization specifically to suggest and nominate experts for positions.
- Consideration of the budget of IPBES must include provision for payment of the expenses of non-governmental professionals, scientists, and practitioners with relevant expertise who serve on the Platform and/or its subsidiary bodies and a process for ensuring transparency and accountability with regard to financing, and potential conflicts and confluences of interest.

Suggestions for language on specific items

To be inclusive and to stress the importance of a continuous development of IPBES, under Agenda rule 8, after the first sentence in the draft, replace the period with a comma and insert the following phrase: "which draft agenda shall include consideration of progress and approval or amendment of the program implementing each of the four functions of IPBES, including key terms, programs and rules of the major agreements affecting biological diversity and ecosystem services.

Under rule 35.2 (adoption of decisions) we suggest inserting the following text as the "appropriate provision";

"a vote of a simple majority of those present and voting shall determine the majority opinion and minority or concurring opinions of at least 10% of those voting shall be included in the decisions and reports with citations to the scientific and legal or policy matters supporting each position."

This would ensure that progress can be made and yet allow for the inclusion of minority opinions. It should in this context be noted that decisions of IPBES are not legally binding for the partners, but are a means to move forward with better transfer of knowledge from science to policy making.