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Policy issues: state of the environment
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**Intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and
ecosystem services**

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

The present report transmits the outcome of the third ad hoc intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting on an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services, held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 7 to 11 June 2010, in accordance with decision SS.XI/4 of the Governing Council. It contains suggested action on a further process to ensure the establishment of such a platform.

* UNEP/GC.26/1.

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I. Suggested action by the Governing Council

1. The Governing Council may wish to consider the adoption of a decision along the lines suggested below:

The Governing Council,

Recalling its main functions and responsibilities set out in General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972, under which the Governing Council is, among other things, to promote the contribution of the relevant international scientific and other professional communities to the acquisition, assessment and exchange of environmental knowledge and information and, as appropriate, to the technical aspects of the formulation and implementation of environmental programmes within the United Nations system,

Taking note of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and its follow-up process, the consultative process towards an international mechanism of scientific expertise on biodiversity and decision IX/15 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity,

Recalling its decision SS.XI/4 of 26 February 2010,

Recognizing the need to strengthen and improve the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for human well-being through the establishment of a new science-policy platform,

Taking note of General Assembly resolution 65/[...] of [...] December 2010,

Having considered the report of the Executive Director on an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services,¹

1. *Endorses* the outcomes of the third and final ad hoc intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting on an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services, held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 7 to 11 June 2010;

2. *Decides* to establish, in cooperation with the relevant organizations and bodies, an intergovernmental science-policy platform for biodiversity and ecosystem services, in order to strengthen the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development;

3. *Requests* the Executive Director, in consultation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme and other relevant organizations and bodies, to convene a first plenary meeting of the platform in order fully to operationalize it without prejudice to its final institutional arrangements;

4. *Also requests* the Executive Director, in preparation for the first plenary meeting of the platform, to invite relevant organizations and bodies to signify their intent to host the platform's secretariat, and to invite Governments to submit their offers for the physical location of the secretariat, using as guidance the criteria contained in the note by the secretariat on options and criteria for selecting the secretariat ;²

5. *Authorizes* the Executive Director to submit to the platform at its first plenary meeting an offer signifying the intent of the United Nations Environment Programme to host the secretariat of the platform and support the functioning of the platform and, subject to the platform's decision at its first plenary meeting on its final institutional arrangements, to make the necessary institutional arrangements in cooperation with other relevant organizations and bodies;

6. *Invites* Governments and relevant organizations in a position to do so to provide financial resources or other contributions to support the platform's functioning and to support the full and effective participation of representatives from developing countries in the platform's plenary meetings;

7. *Requests* the Executive Director to report on progress in the implementation of the present decision to the Governing Council at its twenty-seventh session.

1 UNEP/GC.26/6.

2 UNEP/IPBES/3/INF/4/Add.1.

II. Background

2. In March 2008, a concept note was prepared by the United Nations Environment Programme explaining the rationale for the establishment of an intergovernmental multi-stakeholder platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services, based on a request from the international science committee of the International Mechanism of Scientific Expertise on Biodiversity process and the partners of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment follow-up strategy. The note was made available as an information document to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its ninth meeting, in May 2008 (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/INF/37/Rev.1).

3. The consultations on an international mechanism for scientific expertise on biodiversity and the global strategy on Millennium Ecosystem Assessment follow-up both reflect a general recognition of a need for a platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services. That recognition was further strengthened by decision IX/15 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, by which the parties welcomed the agreement of the Executive Director to convene an ad hoc open-ended intergovernmental multi-stakeholder meeting to consider establishing an efficient international science-policy interface on biodiversity, ecosystem services and human well-being; invited parties to ensure that appropriate science and policy experts were made available to attend; and encouraged the participation of experts from various regions and disciplines.

4. Accordingly, such a meeting was held in Putrajaya, Malaysia, from 10 to 12 November 2008. The outcome of the meeting was reported on by the Executive Director at the twenty-fifth session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum. As a result, by its decision 25/10, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to undertake a further process to explore mechanisms to improve and to strengthen the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development and, specifically, to convene a second intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting in 2009.

5. In accordance with that decision, the Executive Director convened a second meeting in Nairobi from 5 to 9 October 2009. Representatives considered the results of a gap analysis on existing science-policy interfaces on biodiversity and ecosystem services and deliberated on unmet needs. The Executive Director reported to the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its eleventh special session on the outcome of the meeting, resulting in the Council's adoption of decision SS.XI/4.

6. By that decision, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to support efforts by Governments and relevant organizations to finalize in 2010 their deliberations on improving the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development. Specifically, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to convene, in June 2010, a third and final ad hoc intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting to negotiate and reach agreement on whether to establish an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services. By the same decision, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to transmit, on behalf of the Governing Council, the outcomes of and necessary documentation from the third and final meeting to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session for consideration during the high-level segment on biological diversity in September 2010 and thereafter.

III. Outcomes of the third ad hoc intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting on an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services

7. The Executive Director convened the third and final meeting in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 7 to 11 June 2010. It was attended by representatives of 86 Governments and 40 organizations, including relevant United Nations bodies and agencies, secretariats of major multilateral environmental agreements and other intergovernmental organizations, as detailed in the report of the meeting (UNEP/IPBES/3/3).

8. The main outcome of the Busan meeting was an agreement among Governments to establish a new intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services. Governments also agreed on the scope of the platform, which should respond to requests from Governments. They provided overall directions on the operations of the platform, indicating that it should identify and prioritize key scientific information needed for policymakers; should perform regular and timely assessments of knowledge; should support policy formulation and implementation; and should

prioritize key capacity-building needs and catalyse financing for capacity-building activities. Governments also agreed on some key guiding principles for the platform. The Busan outcome document has been reproduced in the annex to the present report.

IV. Follow-up to the third meeting

9. At the third meeting, representatives of Governments recommended that the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session should be invited to consider the conclusions set out in the Busan outcome document and take appropriate action to establish the platform. That recommendation tallies with decision SS.XI/4 of the Governing Council, as described above. In the outcome document, Governments also recommended that the Governing Council should invite the Executive Director, in cooperation with other United Nations bodies, such as 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), to continue to facilitate any ensuing process to establish a platform until such time as a secretariat was established.

10. In line with those recommendations, the Executive Director sent a letter to the Secretary-General dated 30 June 2010, transmitting the report of the Busan meeting and its outcome document for consideration by the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session. This submission was made available as document A/65/383. In addition, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations wrote a letter to the Secretary-General dated 15 July 2010, transmitting the outcome document and requesting the Secretary-General to include an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services as a supplementary item in the agenda of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly (A/65/191).

11. The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, at its thirteenth session, held in Bamako from 21 to 25 June 2010, adopted decision 13/9, by which it welcomed and endorsed the outcome of the Busan meeting.

12. Furthermore, the Executive Board of UNESCO, at its 185th session held in Paris from 5 to 21 October 2010, in its decision 43, noted the important developments relating to biodiversity science and policy in the context of the International Year of Biodiversity, including the conclusions by representatives of Governments in Busan that an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services should be established.³

13. Matters relating to an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services were also among those discussed at the high-level meeting of the General Assembly as a contribution to the International Year of Biodiversity, held on 22 September 2010. As highlighted in the President's summary, noting the important linkage between scientific knowledge and effective policymaking, Member States and other participants stressed the importance of establishing an intergovernmental science-policy platform for biodiversity and ecosystem services and welcomed the progress made in Busan.

14. In addition, at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Nagoya, Japan, from 18 to 29 October 2010, the parties adopted decision X/11 to welcome the outcome of the Busan meeting and encourage the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session to consider the establishment of the platform at the earliest opportunity.

15. It is expected that the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session will further consider the conclusions set out in the Busan outcome document and take appropriate action to establish such a platform.

V. Way forward

16. As recommended in Busan and in accordance with the guidance provided by the General Assembly, the Governing Council should consider endorsing the Busan outcome and establishing an intergovernmental science-policy platform for biodiversity and ecosystem services in cooperation with relevant organizations and bodies. The Governing Council may also wish to consider requesting the Executive Director, in consultation with UNESCO, FAO and UNDP, to convene a first plenary meeting of the platform in order fully to operationalize it. In doing so, cooperation with the secretariats of biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements, international scientific organizations, non-governmental organizations, private-sector institutions and all other relevant organizations should also be sought. The Governing Council should also consider authorizing the Executive Director, in

cooperation with the executive heads of UNESCO, FAO and UNDP, to make appropriate institutional arrangements to support the platform.

17. It is expected that, at its first plenary meeting, the platform will consider its operational modalities. First, its rules of procedure, specifying the modalities for participation, membership, frequency of meetings, preparation of agendas, selection criteria and the length of service of officers (including the chair and vice-chairs) and conduct of business should be adopted. The rules should also cover procedures governing the preparation of reports, specifying an overall process for such preparation, the compilation of nominees and the selection of authors, reviewers and review editors, in addition to the review and approval of reports. The procedures governing the platform's administration should also be decided on.

18. In addition to the above, at its first plenary meeting the platform is expected also to consider and decide on the institutional arrangements for the its secretariat, including its functions and composition, in addition to the selection of its host institution or institutions and host country. In preparation for such discussions, the Governing Council may wish to consider requesting the Executive Director to invite relevant organizations and bodies to signify their intent to host the platform's secretariat, and to invite Governments to submit offers for the physical location of the secretariat, using the criteria contained in document UNEP/IPBES/3/INF/4/Add.1 on options and criteria for selecting the secretariat. Furthermore, at its first plenary meeting the platform is expected also to decide on details of its governance structure, including whether it, in addition to its plenary as the main body for decision-making, should have an executive body only or an executive body and a scientific advisory panel. A detailed programme of work and budget is another key issue to be considered and decided on at the first plenary meeting.

19. These modalities of the new platform will be developed paying full attention to the recommendations included in the report by the InterAcademy Council on 30 August 2010 entitled "Climate Change Assessments, Review of the Processes & Procedures of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change". The report, prepared by the InterAcademy Council based on its review of the Panel, recommends fundamental reform of the Panel's management structure and operations, such as its governance and management, review process, how it characterizes and communicates uncertainty, communications and transparency in the assessment process. These recommendations, lessons learned and the Panel's experiences will be considered fully in future deliberations on and the designing of the new platform's operational modalities. Two working groups have been established, on process and governance, respectively, to review the recommendations made in the report and to suggest actions to operationalize them. It is expected that these working groups will conclude their work in April 2011 and that their outcomes will be used to guide deliberations at the platform's first plenary meeting.

Annex

Busan outcome

The representatives of Governments at the third ad hoc intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting on an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services, convened in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 7 to 11 June 2010:

1. Recall decision SS.XI/4 of 26 February 2010, by which the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme requested the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to convene, in June 2010, a third and final ad hoc intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting to negotiate and reach agreement on whether to establish an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services and to transmit, on behalf of the Governing Council, the outcomes of and necessary documentation from the third and final meeting to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session for consideration during the high-level segment on biological diversity in September 2010 and thereafter;
2. Note the outcomes of the first and second ad hoc intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meetings on an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services, held in Putrajaya, Malaysia, from 10 to 12 November 2008, and in Nairobi from 5 to 9 October 2009, respectively;
3. Acknowledge the importance of terrestrial, marine and coastal, and inland water biodiversity and ecosystem services which, while critically important for sustainable development and current and future human well-being, particularly with regard to poverty eradication, are currently experiencing significant loss; also acknowledge that the science-policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services must be strengthened at all levels; and further acknowledge the importance of ensuring that the science made available is of the highest quality and independence, of enhancing cooperation with relevant United Nations bodies and of building capacity to mainstream biodiversity and ecosystem services;
4. Welcome the expressions of interest in supporting the proposed platform by the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and encourage further consideration of their roles by their respective governing bodies;
5. Note the interest of the United Nations Development Programme in the proposed platform and the important role of that organization in capacity-building within the United Nations system;
6. Conclude, having now reached agreement, as requested by the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme through its decision SS.XI/4, that an intergovernmental science-policy platform for biodiversity and ecosystem services should be established to strengthen the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development, as follows:
 - (a) Focusing on government needs and based on priorities established by the plenary, the platform should respond to requests from Governments, including those conveyed to it by multilateral environmental agreements related to biodiversity and ecosystem services as determined by their respective governing bodies. The plenary should welcome inputs and suggestions from, and the participation of, United Nations bodies related to biodiversity and ecosystem services as determined by their respective governing bodies. The plenary should also encourage and take into account, as appropriate, inputs and suggestions made by relevant stakeholders, such as other intergovernmental organizations, international and regional scientific organizations, environment trust funds, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. To facilitate this, and to ensure that the platform's work programme is focused and efficient, a process to receive and prioritize requests should be established by the plenary;
 - (b) The new platform should identify and prioritize key scientific information needed for policymakers at appropriate scales and catalyse efforts to generate new knowledge by engaging in dialogue with key scientific organizations, policymakers and funding organizations, but should not directly undertake new research;
 - (c) The new platform should perform regular and timely assessments of knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystem services and their interlinkages, which should include comprehensive global, regional and, as necessary, subregional assessments and thematic issues at appropriate scales

and new topics identified by science and as decided upon by the plenary. These assessments must be scientifically credible, independent and peer-reviewed, and must identify uncertainties. There should be a clear and transparent process for sharing and incorporating relevant data. The new platform should maintain a catalogue of relevant assessments, identify the need for regional and subregional assessments and help to catalyse support for subregional and national assessments, as appropriate;

(d) The new platform should support policy formulation and implementation by identifying policy-relevant tools and methodologies, such as those arising from assessments, to enable decision makers to gain access to those tools and methodologies, and, where necessary, to promote and catalyse their further development;

(e) The new platform should prioritize key capacity-building needs to improve the science-policy interface at appropriate levels and then provide and call for financial and other support for the highest-priority needs related directly to its activities, as decided by the plenary, and catalyse financing for such capacity-building activities by providing a forum with conventional and potential sources of funding;

(f) The new platform should be established as an independent intergovernmental body administered by one or more existing United Nations organizations, agencies, funds or programmes;

(g) The plenary, which should be the platform's decision-making body, should be open to participation by all States Members of the United Nations and by regional economic integration organizations. Intergovernmental organizations and other relevant stakeholders should participate in the plenary as observers, in accordance with the rules of procedure established by the plenary. Through its rules of procedure, the plenary should in general take decisions by consensus of government representatives;

(h) One chair and four vice-chairs, taking due account of the principle of geographical balance among the five United Nations regions, should be nominated and selected by Governments which are members of the plenary. The criteria, nomination process and length of service should be decided by the plenary;

(i) A core trust fund to be allocated by the plenary should be established to receive voluntary contributions from Governments, United Nations bodies, the Global Environment Facility, other intergovernmental organizations and other stakeholders, such as the private sector and foundations;

7. Also conclude that in carrying out its work the platform should:

(a) Collaborate with existing initiatives on biodiversity and ecosystem services, including multilateral environmental agreements, United Nations bodies and networks of scientists and knowledge holders, to fill gaps and build upon their work, while avoiding duplication;

(b) Be scientifically independent and ensure credibility, relevance and legitimacy through the peer review of its work and transparency in its decision-making processes;

(c) Use clear, transparent and scientifically credible processes for the exchange, sharing and use of data, information and technologies from all relevant sources, including non-peer-reviewed literature, as appropriate;

(d) Recognize and respect the contribution of indigenous and local knowledge to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems;

(e) Provide policy-relevant information, but not policy-prescriptive advice, mindful of the respective mandates of the multilateral environmental agreements;

(f) Integrate capacity-building into all relevant aspects of its work according to priorities decided by the plenary;

(g) Recognize the unique biodiversity and scientific knowledge thereof within and among regions, and also recognize the need for the full and effective participation of developing countries and for balanced regional representation and participation in its structure and work;

(h) Take an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach that incorporates all relevant disciplines, including social and natural sciences;

(i) Recognize the need for gender equity in all relevant aspects of its work;

(j) Address terrestrial, marine and inland water biodiversity and ecosystem services and their interactions;

- (k) Ensure the full use of national, subregional and regional assessments and knowledge, as appropriate;
8. Further conclude that the platform's efficiency and effectiveness should be independently reviewed and evaluated on a periodic basis as decided by the plenary, with adjustments to be made as necessary;
9. Recommend that the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session should be invited to consider the conclusions set out in the present outcome document and take appropriate action to establish the platform;
10. Also recommend that the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme should invite the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Development Programme, to continue to facilitate any ensuing process to implement the platform until such time as a secretariat is established.
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