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COUNCIL

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Progress report on the establishment of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

Executive Summary

On 21 April 2012, representatives of more than 90 Governments decided to establish an independent intergovernmental body to be known as the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (Platform). The Plenary of the Platform, at its first session, will decide on the link with the United Nations system. Governments requested the United Nations Environment Programme to facilitate the Platform until a secretariat of the Platform has been established, with a view to its being administered by one or more of the following: UNEP, UNESCO, FAO and UNDP. The seat of the Platform secretariat will be located in Bonn, Germany.

Suggested action by the Council

The Council may wish to welcome FAO's cooperation with other UN bodies in the preparation of the joint proposal for hosting the secretariat of the Platform, reaffirm FAO's commitment to co-hosting the Platform secretariat with other UN bodies and call upon Members to provide extra-budgetary resources in support of FAO's contribution to the Platform.

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I. Introduction

1. On 20 December 2010, the United Nations General Assembly called on the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to take the necessary steps to establish an Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (Platform). The General Assembly requested UNEP,

“(…) without prejudice to the final institutional arrangements for the intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services and in consultation with all relevant organizations and bodies, in order to fully operationalize the platform, to convene a plenary meeting providing for the full and effective participation of all Member States, in particular representatives from developing countries, to determine modalities and institutional arrangements for the platform at the earliest opportunity;”¹

2. In February 2011, the UNEP Governing Council requested its Executive Director to convene the plenary meeting in 2011, in cooperation with UNESCO, FAO and UNDP and to facilitate any ensuing process to implement the Platform until such time as a secretariat is established.²

3. The FAO Conference, at its 37th session, welcomed the decision of Governments to establish the Platform. It authorized the Director-General of FAO through Resolution 14/2011 to offer to establish and (co-) host, or otherwise support the Platform with other relevant international organizations and requested the Director-General to report to Council on progress in the establishment of the Platform and its financial and administrative implications.³ On 21 April 2012, the Platform was established by more than 90 Governments as an independent intergovernmental Platform. This document provides information on the establishment of the Platform and its possible financial and administrative implications.

II. Background

4. Between September 2008 and June 2010, UNEP convened three ad hoc open-ended intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meetings on the Platform. FAO participated, as an observer, in these meetings and reported on FAO’s numerous past, on-going and future relevant assessments and activities in the field of biodiversity and ecosystem services.⁴ At the third meeting, held in June 2010 in Busan, Republic of Korea, Government representatives adopted the *Busan Outcome* recommending 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.”⁵

5. The *Busan Outcome* recommended that the Platform be established like its prototype, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), as an independent intergovernmental body administered by one or more existing United Nations organizations, agencies, funds or programmes. The plenary, which should be the decision-making body of the Platform, should be open to participation by all States Members of the United Nations and by regional economic organizations. Intergovernmental Organizations and other relevant stakeholders should be allowed to participate as observers, in accordance with rules of procedure to be adopted by the Platform. The *Busan Outcome* specified neither the institutional arrangements nor the host institution of the Platform or the physical location of its secretariat.

¹ A/RES/65/162.

² UNEP GC/GMEF 26, Decision 26/4.

³ C 2011/REP, paragraph 136.

⁴ UNEP/IPBES/1/INF/2/Rev.1 (available in English only)

⁵ UNEP/IPBES/3/3 - Annex

6. At the request of the UN General Assembly, UNEP convened in October 2011 and April 2012, in collaboration with UNESCO, FAO and UNDP, two sessions of a “Plenary meeting to determine modalities and institutional arrangements for an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services” (Plenary meeting). At the second session of the Plenary meeting, government representatives of more than 90 States “decided to establish an independent intergovernmental body to be known as the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.” They also decided that the first session of the Plenary of the Platform would decide on the link with the United Nations system. In order to fully operationalize the Platform, Governments also agreed on the functions and operating principles and on some institutional arrangements and rules of procedure of the Platform and requested the secretariat of UNEP to facilitate the Platform until a Secretariat of the Platform is established, with a view to its being administered by one or more of the following: UNEP, UNESCO, FAO and UNDP. Governments also decided that the seat of the secretariat of the platform will be located in Bonn, Germany.⁶

7. The Plenary meeting, at its first session, invited UNEP, UNESCO, FAO and UNDP to submit a joint proposal for hosting the single administrative secretariat of the Platform highlighting possible collaborative arrangements and clarify the responsibilities of each entity. In response, UNEP, UNESCO, FAO and UNDP prepared an indicative joint proposal to host the secretariat of the Platform, including draft collaborative arrangements, for consideration by the Plenary meeting at its second session.⁷ At its second session the Plenary meeting welcomed the joint proposal and, recognizing that the proposal was only indicative, asked that the proposal be further elaborated and a final version be presented at the first meeting of the plenary of the Platform. The issues the four organizations were requested to clarify included: potential implications of the discussion on environmental governance at Rio+20 on the secretariat arrangements; the relationship between the secretariat and the host country; the relationship between the proposed Management Group of the secretariat and the subsidiary bodies and Bureau of the Platform; estimated costs and how the overhead costs would be minimized; the potential role of regional hubs and their relationship to the secretariat; further clarification concerning the commitment of host institutions; clarification concerning which organization's rules would be used for staffing and financing.

III. Financial and administrative implications

8. The FAO Conference, at its 37th session authorized the Director-General to offer to establish and (co-) host, or otherwise support the Platform with other relevant organizations, provided that costs be met through extra-budgetary resources with appropriate administrative and operational costs reimbursed in accordance with the prevailing FAO Support Cost Policy.

9. No decisions have been taken yet with regard to the budget of the Platform. The institutional arrangements, as adopted by Governments at the second session of the Plenary meeting, specify that a core trust fund to be allocated by the Plenary of the Platform will be established to receive voluntary contributions from Governments, as well as from United Nations bodies, the Global Environment Facility, other intergovernmental organizations and other stakeholders such as the private sector and foundations, on the understanding that such funding will be without conditionalities, will not orient the work of the Platform and cannot be earmarked for specific activities.

IV. Conclusion

10. In the light of FAO's mandate as well as its experience and long-standing role in relation to periodic assessments of the state of the world's genetic resources for food and agriculture and other assessments relevant to biodiversity and ecosystem services, Government representatives participating in the Platform consultations have identified FAO as an important player and possible key partner for the Platform. It is important to ensure that the work programmes of FAO and the Platform

⁶ UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/9 (Report to be issued at: <http://www.ipbes.net/plenary-sessions/second-session-of-plenary.html>)

⁷ UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/6

complement each other and create synergies, rather than overlap, and that the Platform and FAO coordinate and collaborate closely on relevant assessments and other activities.

11. The Council may wish to:

- Welcome the close cooperation between UNEP, UNESCO, FAO and UNDP in the preparation of the sessions of the Plenary meeting and of the joint proposal for hosting the secretariat of the Platform;
- reaffirm FAO's commitment to co-hosting the Platform secretariat with other UN bodies, provided that costs be met through extra-budgetary resources with appropriate administrative and operational costs reimbursed in accordance with the prevailing FAO Support Cost Policy;
- call upon Members to provide extra-budgetary resources in support of FAO's contribution to the Platform.