

Consultative Workshop: Strengthening Science-Policy Interface to Support Environmental Governance Actions

24 – 25 April 2024, Bonn, Germany

Environmental Policy Unit, Law Division

The Environmental Policy Unit (EPU) of UNEP's Law Division organized a two-day consultative workshop during 24 – 25 April 2024 online and in Bonn, Germany, to discuss issues of strengthening Science-Policy Interfaces (SPIs) and policy coherence as inputs to EPU's programme document development.

The purpose of the consultative workshop was to bring together stakeholders and experts to provide input to the project document under development on Strengthening Science-Policy Interface to Support Environmental Governance Actions. The project objective is to support countries and institutions in strengthening Science-Policy Interfaces as a component under the Governance and Accountability for Biodiversity Programme Coordination Project (PCP) implemented by UNEP, which aims to accelerate the delivery of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF) and other biodiversity-related commitments through efforts promoting improved governance, and enhanced transparency and accountability, to deliver on national and international commitments for biodiversity.

The meeting benefited from the participation of colleagues from United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), Ramsar Convention, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Secretariat, and United Nations Environmental Management Group (EMG), as well as colleagues from UNEP's Ecosystem Division.

The inputs, ideas, and feedback from experts and relevant stakeholders supported EPU with identifying the scope of interventions, potential target areas and institutions, ground proposed project outputs, and finalize key components of the project document under development.

Day 1

Current and future actions on Science-Policy Interfaces that support environmental governance actions and related challenges

The meeting began with an opening session focusing on issues of interconnected nature related to environmental management and governance where the need to look at integrated approaches to SPIs and policy coherence, including increased collaboration between actors and assessment panels, were highlighted. This included references on the need to convert commitments and recommendations from multilateral processes into actions on the ground and operationalize the Common Approaches of the UN.

The presentation from the IPCC secretariat provided an overview of the IPCC mandate and key principles guiding its work through assessment cycles. It outlined the process the report is prepared and provided an update on the preparations for the seventh assessment report. Additionally, highlighted the impact that the IPCC has had in the national and international climate policy as well as the linkages and potential for collaboration with other assessment panels. During the seventh cycle, there will be focus on strengthening the collaboration among assessment panels and improving the communication of actionable findings. Options for collaboration include jointly developed glossaries, scenarios, definitions, cross-report authors, joint/co-sponsored workshops or expert meetings.

Stressing the need for a more comprehensive look at policy components of assessments and special reports, UNCCD called for balancing policy relevant key messages with policy-oriented recommendations as key for the future. Highlighting current collaborations between the UNCCD, the SPI panel of UNCCD with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), IPCC and Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) secretariats, the presentation from UNCCD cited the approach of its SPI panel in drawing policy options for UNCCD's decision-making processes from various reports, including the Conference of Parties meeting outcomes.



The ensuing discussions highlighted the gap in knowledge and information available at national level, especially for the focal points from different conventions on key messages from COPs and decision-making processes. Elaborating various assessments, including through the Global Land Indicators Initiative, the presentation called for specific inputs to SPI processes from specialized organizations besides the members of the Panel.

Discussing further, the need for having a global community of practice to bring in coherence among the assessment panels was identified as an option to connect the dots from various outcomes of scientific bodies of MEAs and assessment panels.

The presentation from the UNFCCC secretariat focused on the need to look at adequacy and legitimacy of science, the work through annual research dialogues, options for strengthening issues under topics such as transformational adaptation and the related. Calling for stronger links with social issues, the presentation highlighted the need to further strengthen the science behind issues such as loss and damage. The presentation also called for increased focus on innovations and risks – an issue needing more national attention in terms of assessing the relevance of approaches for transformational change in different national contexts.

The need for regular briefings and capacity development for various MEAs and focal points of assessment panels on current and emerging issues was also discussed.

In the presentation focusing on UN Common Approach to biodiversity, the EMG in its presentation called for development of specific key performance indicators (KPIs) on SPI issues and policy coherence and suggested the need to work on issues of aligning institutional policies with SPI issues.

[Policy/strategy and technical gaps and challenges on science-policy uptake at national, regional, global level](#)

During the plenary discussions on identifying strategic and technical gaps on SPI issues and its uptake as well as overcoming these challenges, the participants identified the following key areas:



- The need for identifying and leveraging relevant scientific networks at different levels, especially at national level, for making SPI issues responsive at national and local levels.
- Regional networks are potential connecting points for relevant uptake of science-policy issues, supporting flow of information and inputs from national to global level and vice versa.
- There is a challenge in seeking and providing appropriate geographical balance in identification of scientific issues and information related to solutions. Considering most of the science originates from developed countries, the developing countries and others face a challenge to relate the science and solutions to national contexts and responding to local issues. This gap needs to be filled through creating national spaces for better science-policy dialogues and seeking scientific inputs.
- Related to the point above and considering the social equity issue of addressing environmental challenges (such as those related to livelihood opportunities and job creation), SPI focus should be on producing actionable findings that can be applied on national and local levels rather than a 'one size fit all' approach.
- Approaches targeting existing barriers, such as available data, should focus on differentiating issues such as global pathway approaches that are different between developed and developing countries. Capacity development and understanding of these will be critical for effective and equitable participation of countries in SPI discussions.
- Horizon scans and collaborative dialogues focused on provision of priorities will be critical for future SPI considerations, as the current SPI focus is on past and current challenges and solutions. Such foresight can also provide opportunities for developing countries to identify options for better preparedness in finding solutions at national and local levels.
- The role and use of local and Indigenous knowledge is critical in addressing locally relevant SPI options. The focus on this is however limited, as well as the participation of local and indigenous knowledge holders in SPI processes. One way to fill the gap is to focus on understanding the science behind local practices and measures and focus on efforts to effectively communicate and raise awareness of its relevance in decision-making processes.



- There is a need to source science locally to effectively build SPIs that can respond to national challenges as well as translate into regional and global SPI processes. Setting up national science-policy panels could be a useful option to fill the gap.
- Data governance, availability, use, and dissemination are critical for strengthening SPI at all levels. Creating national data networks and focusing on harmonization will be critical for SPI related actions.
- There is a need to enhance the capacities and provide more options for formal and informal collaborations within and among MEAs and assessment panels. This will close the existing gap on conflicting attributions of data, appropriate curation of messages, and consolidated messaging for various stakeholder groups, including policy makers.
- There is a need to identify appropriate governance systems and financing for implementing SPI actions at all levels.

Day 2

Discussion on the structure and components of the project document under development

The second day of the workshop started with a recapture of discussions during the first day, followed by a presentation on the problem tree, Theory of Change (ToC) and elements of the logical framework that is currently being drafted to develop the programme document.

- Participants suggested focusing on actions and not necessarily on reporting issues as presented in the central problem statement.
- There was a suggestion that it will be important to consider the different mandates between the MEAs scientific bodies and assessment panels. It was stressed that the solution tree could benefit from better language – such as rather than suggesting ‘review’ to use ‘strengthen’ and a re-look at the box related to political structures will be needed. Participants also felt that links with development agendas should be included.



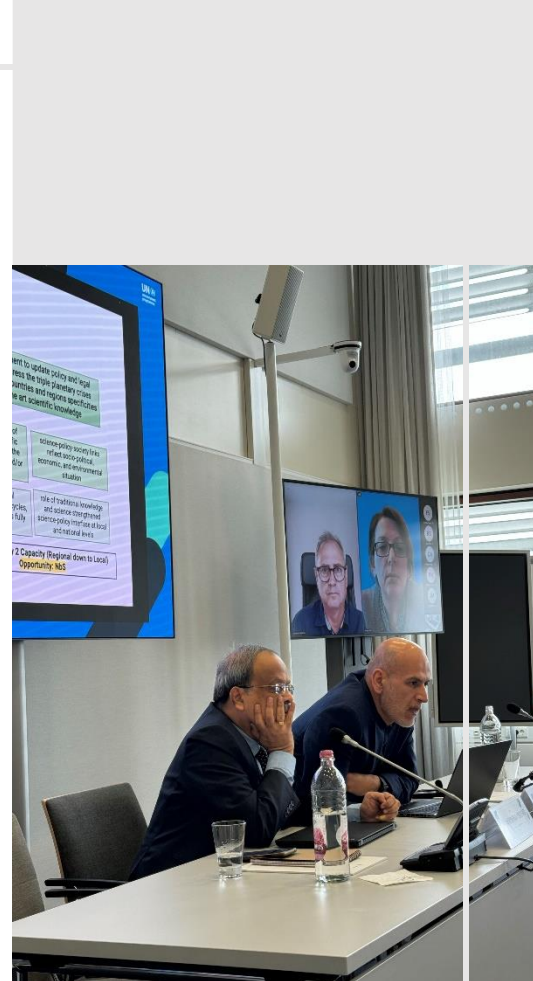
- A comment was made that the ToC could benefit from undertaking some baseline assessments related to policy coherence in support of SPI work. The issue of policy development needs support from relevant scientific knowledge which should be captured in the ToC. The recommendation was that the project should focus on 'facilitation' and UNEP as a facilitating body. It was also stressed that an output on 'generation' of scientific knowledge and 'uptake' should be considered.
- Suggestions were made that translating science into action should be included at the output/action level, and for UNEP to potentially serve as a convener of SPI actors to discuss interventions at regional and national levels. It was highlighted that the 'relevance' of outcomes of scientific assessments and recommendations needs to be reflected appropriately.
- It was suggested that language in output 1.1 should be amended to reflect the facilitating role of EPU and UNEP, rather than provide the facilitation service as mentioned in the draft ToC.

Participants were requested to continue providing inputs to the programme document and provide an opportunity for the EPU to identify linkages and opportunities for its work on issues related to SPI and coherence.

Assessing policy coherence and options

A presentation on policy options related to SPI issues was made by UNEP. The presentation focused on policy mapping related to the Rio Conventions in the context of SPI issues, using the eight domains of policy coherence being used by policy coherence for sustainable development processes. Discussions on the presentation focused on the need for enhancing capacities for supporting policy coherence, including in support of SPI issues.

In the concluding session, the participants welcomed the opportunity for them to contribute to the development of the project document. They also mentioned their readiness to provide further inputs and support to the development of the project and partner as needed and relevant.



Annex. 1

Participant List

Barron Orr

Chief Scientist
UNCCD

Heather Maseko

Programme Officer
UNFCCC Secretariat

Filip Aggestam

Scientific and Technical Officer
Ramsar Convention

Balakrishna Pisupati

Head of Environmental Policy Unit
UNEP

Aiping Chen

Programme Officer
UNFCCC Secretariat

Dagmar Zikova

Scientific Advisor
Convention on Migratory Species

Hossein Fadei

Head of Secretariat
UN Environmental Management Group
Secretariat

Fredrika Sweno

Project Support Officer
UNEP

Online

Ermira Fida

Deputy Executive Secretary
IPCC Secretariat

Georgina Athamandia Avlonitis

Programme Management Officer
UNEP

Pamella Camu

Project Support Officer
UNEP

Ruci Botei

Programme Officer
UNEP

Fransesco Alarcon

Consultant
UNEP

Joyce Mwea

Programme Management Assistant
UNEP

Annex 2.

Agenda

S/NO	AGENDA TOPIC	SPEAKER/FACILITATOR	TIME AND VENUE
Day 1 – Wednesday 24 April 2024			
1	Registration Room 2116 - The room is located on floor level 21 at UN Campus "Langer Eugen", Hermann-Ehlers-Str-10, 53113 Bonn, Germany.		8:30am - 9:00am Room 2116
2	Opening Remarks and setting the scene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balakrishna Pisupati, Head, the Environment Policy Unit, Law division, UNEP Hossein Fadei, Head, UN Environment Management Group (UN EMG) Secretariat Barron Orr, Chief Scientist, UNCCD 	9:00am - 9:30am Room 2116
3	Presentation by IPCC secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ermira Fida, Deputy Executive Secretary, IPCC Secretariat 	9:30am - 9:50am Online
4	Presentation by UNCCD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barron Orr, Chief Scientist, UNCCD 	9:50am - 10:10am Room 2116
Health Break 10.10am – 10.40am			
5	Presentation by UN EMG Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hossein Fadei, Head, UN Environment Management Group (UN EMG) Secretariat 	10:40am - 11:00am Online
6	Presentation by UNFCCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heather Maseko, Intergovernmental support and Collective Progress division, UNFCCC Aiping Chen, Programmes Coordination Division, UNFCCC 	11:00am - 11:20am Room 2116
7	Discussion on presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator: Balakrishna Pisupati, Head, the Environment Policy Unit, Law division, UNEP 	11:20am - 12:00pm Room 2116
8	Current Science-Policy Interface approaches that support environmental governance actions related to biodiversity, with specific focus on policy coherence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Science-Policy Interfaces (SPIs) and its implementation Introduction to "Strengthening Science-Policy Interface to Support Environmental Governance Actions" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation by Balakrishna Pisupati, Head, the Environment Policy Unit, Law division, UNEP 	12:00pm - 12:30pm Room 2116
Lunch Break 12.30pm – 1.30pm			
9	Plenary Discussions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue 1 – Policy/strategy gaps and challenges on SPI uptake at national, regional, global level Issue 2 – Technical gaps and challenges on SPI uptake at national, regional, global level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator: Hossein Fadei, Head, UN Environment Management Group (UN EMG) Secretariat 	1.30pm - 2:30pm Room 2116

10	Plenary Discussions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue 1 – Solutions to policy/strategy gaps and challenges Issue 2 – Solutions to technical gaps and challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator: Dagmar Zikova, Scientific Advisor, Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) 	2:30pm - 3:30pm Room 2116
11	Unpacking SPI approaches in support of Nature-Based Solution (NbS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback from internal consultations on SPI approaches including policy coherence in support of NbS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation by Fredrika Sweno, the Environment Policy Unit, Law division, UNEP 	3:30pm - 4:00pm Room 2116
12	Wrap up and closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator: Balakrishna Pisupati, Head, the Environment Policy Unit, Law division, UNEP 	4:00pm - 4:15pm Room 2116
Health Break and End of Sessions for Day One			
Day 2 – Thursday 25 April 2024			
13	Recap of highlights/key messages of day 1 of the consultative workshop and introduction to elements of Theory of Change and Logical framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recap of highlights and key messages from day 1 Discussion on theory of change and elements on logical framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator: Balakrishna Pisupati, Head, the Environment Policy Unit, Law division, UNEP Presentation by Francisco, Consultant, Environment Policy Unit, Law Division, UNEP 	9:30am - 10:30am Room 2116
Health Break 10.30am – 11.00am			
14	Assessing policy coherence and options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation by Ruci Botei, the Environment Policy Unit, Law Division, UNEP 	11:00am - 11:30am Room 2116
15	Interventions by participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elaboration of specific actions for SPI in action project at national and regional levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator: Filip Aggestam, Ramsar Convention, Scientific and Technical Officer 	11:30am - 12:30pm Room 2116
16	Inputs on Project Document <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consolidate actions and propose specific interventions for SPI uptake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator: Ruci Botei, the Environment Policy Unit, Law Division, UNEP 	12:30pm – 1:00pm Room 2116
Lunch Break 1pm – 2pm			
17	Way forward and closing remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator: Balakrishna Pisupati, Head, the Environment Policy Unit, Law division, UNEP 	2:00pm – 3:00pm Room 2116
Health Break and End of the Training Workshop			