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Item 5 (a) of the provisional agenda\*

**Initial work programme of the Platform: task  
forces on capacity-building, knowledge and data  
(including data and management plan/system) and  
indigenous and local knowledge systems****Contribution of the Sub-Global Assessment Network to  
addressing the priority capacity-building needs of the Platform****Note by the secretariat**

The annex to the present note sets out a briefing paper on the contribution of the Sub-Global Assessment Network to addressing the priority capacity-building needs of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. The briefing paper was prepared by the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre in its capacity as secretariat of the Sub-Global Assessment Network. The Network has been referred to in a range of discussions and documents of the Platform, including in meetings of the task force on capacity-building. The paper is intended to describe ways in which the Network can provide support to the Platform in relation to the priority capacity-building needs proposed by the task force on capacity-building, as set out in the note by the secretariat on the outcome of the task force on capacity-building (IPBES/3/3). The annex is presented as received, without formal editing.

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\* IPBES/3/1.

## Annex

# Contribution of the SGA Network to addressing IPBES priority capacity-building needs

Briefing Paper for the Third Session of the Platform's Plenary (IPBES-3)

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## Introduction

1. In establishing IPBES, governments identified capacity building as one of the four functions of the Platform. Subsequently, when the work programme for 2014-2018 was adopted in decision IPBES-2/5, two deliverables explicitly on capacity building were included. Deliverable 1b aims to support development of the capacities needed for implementing the Platform's work programme, while deliverable 1a aims to help ensure that priority capacity building needs are matched with the necessary resources.
2. The IPBES operating principles clearly identify the importance of building on existing initiatives, and also require IPBES to ensure the full use of national, subregional and regional assessments of knowledge. This is reinforced by the requirement placed on the task force through its terms of reference to ensure that its activities draw effectively on existing experience, complementing and building upon existing initiatives, and the expectation that the capacity building deliverables would be supported through and build on a geographically widespread network of institutions and initiatives. How this is being done is summarised in IPBES/3/3 and IPBES/3/INF/1.
3. The Sub-Global Assessment (SGA) Network ([www.ecosystemassessments.net](http://www.ecosystemassessments.net)) is a community of practice which seeks to create a common platform for practitioners (individuals and organisations) involved in ecosystem assessments at the sub-global levels (regional, sub-regional, national, sub-national) with the intention of: building capacity to undertake and use assessments; and supporting relevant global processes such as. This will be achieved by:
  - Offering opportunities for training in specific tools and approaches related to ecosystem assessments (e.g. training workshops on valuation, scenarios, mainstreaming etc.);
  - Capturing, synthesizing and disseminating examples of best practices and lessons learnt in undertaking ecosystem assessments;
  - Developing e-learning tools which are of interest to ecosystem assessment practitioners;
  - Encouraging and supporting ongoing exchanges between and amongst SGAs, either through virtual or face-to-face means (e.g. sharing of expertise);
  - Establishing and maintaining a website devoted to the SGA Network which will allow access to relevant materials and information; and
  - Linking SGAs to the scientific community and to relevant information and data sources which are useful for undertaking ecosystem assessment work.
4. Communities of practice have often been referred to as essential for supporting the delivery of the IPBES work programme, and explicit mention has been made on a number of occasions of the SGA Network. Communities of practice are a valuable means of promoting and facilitating sharing of knowledge and experience, supporting both individual and organisational long-term capacity building at different scales to ensure engagement in the different work programme deliverables.

## Priority capacity building needs

3. The IPBES Task Force on Capacity Building has reviewed the capacity building needs identified by Governments and other stakeholders, and in IPBES/3/3 (see Annex I) has summarised those needs and suggested initial priority needs and how they might be addressed. Both the identified needs and the priorities actually align quite closely with the interests and experience of the SGA Network, and there are clearly opportunities for collaboration and cooperation. Specifically:
  - a) The task force has suggested that the **ability to participate in IPBES deliverables** would be primarily addressed through the proposed fellowship, exchange and training programme. As is indicated below, the

SGA Network already has experience of running mentoring and training programmes relating to the implementation and use of assessments, and could therefore support IPBES in this area.

- b) The task force has also suggested a focus on enhancing the **capacity to undertake and use national assessments**. As a community of practice working in this area, the SGA Network could help facilitate access to technical support in particular, working as appropriate with the task force and with BES-Net (see IPBES/3/INF/19).
4. A core objective of the SGA Network is to build capacity through both face-to-face and virtual mechanisms. The SGA Network is an established mechanism and community of practice of assessment practitioners. The SGA Network could support through either the implementation of specific activities or provide access to technical expertise from within the network to the priority needs.

### Programme on fellowships, exchange and training

5. The Task Force on Capacity Building has developed a proposed programme on fellowships, exchanges and training (IPBES/3/3 Annex II). The Task Force has identified three outcomes to be achieved through this programme, which can be summarised as:
- a) development and strengthening of individual and institutional capacities
  - b) more effective use knowledge by decision makers
  - c) increased cooperation amongst those involved in delivering the work programme
6. The SGA Network has a substantial history as a community of practice of developing capacity at regional and national scales. Recent activities include:
- a) development of a mentoring scheme for early career ecosystem assessment practitioners
  - b) capacity building workshops on national level assessments as building blocks for regional assessments
  - c) delivering webinars on key issues of interest to members
  - d) global network meetings to facilitate sharing of experience and peer-to-peer learning
  - e) establishment of regional hubs to support and facilitate regional workshops and activities
11. The SGA Network developed and piloted a mentoring programme in 2014. Feedback from both mentors and mentees has been positive, with learning objectives achieved and hopefully long-term relationships established. The SGA Network is well placed to share lessons learned from these experiences, and to work in support of IPBES as it implements its proposed mentoring programme.
12. At the centre of SGA Network activities is a training programme that is delivered at the regional level but with emphasis at building capacity at the national level. Previous training programmes have covered specific tools and the ecosystem assessment process. Training programmes have been delivered as a set of webinars, 1-2 day workshops and extended 4-5 day workshops. The SGA Network works with existing centres of expertise, and with regional centres and experts to deliver its training programme. Feedback on the training programme has been positive, and the Secretariat has been using lessons learnt to improve the delivery of training. The SGA Network is therefore well placed to support and potentially deliver components of the proposed IPBES training programme.
13. The SGA Network has a number of planned and funded activities for 2015, which are able to support the activities of the IPBES capacity building activities. The activities include the further development of regional hubs, meetings for the Latin American and Southern Africa regions, the development of e-learning for ecosystem assessment, and further capacity building workshops and webinars.

## Other opportunities

14. The SGA Network is a community of practice for assessment practitioners undertaking ecosystem assessments at different scales, and includes expertise on ecosystem assessments in 80 countries across all UN regions. The Secretariat will ensure that wherever appropriate this expertise is made available to IPBES through the most appropriate mechanisms, including through the formal mechanism such as the catalogues, and encouraging nominations to the different task forces and expert groups and in support to the different capacity building activities.
  15. The meeting which established IPBES called for the development of the Catalogue of Assessments on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services with the primary intention to learn lessons from previous assessments to inform the future development of IPBES. The catalogue (see <http://catalog.ipbes.net>) was originally developed with close involvement of the Sub-global Assessment Network. Rather than duplicating efforts in collating information on different assessments, the SGA Network Secretariat has been promoting the IPBES Catalogue of Assessments as the depository of assessment information for its network members.
  16. Policy support tools and methodologies are used within ecosystem assessments and are also developed in response to assessments. The SGA Network members may be in a position to contribute tools and case studies on use of the tools to the proposed Catalogue of Policy Support Tools and Methodologies (see IPBES/3/5 and IPBES/3/INF/8). The SGA Network is also in position to promote the use of the Catalogue of Policy Support Tools and Methodologies through the network communications and as part of its training programme.
  17. The task force is in the process of planning for a matchmaking facility (IPBES/3/INF/1) which aims to bring together those who have capacity building needs with those able to help address those needs, whether financial or technical. As a community of practice, the SGA Network membership includes a wide range of individuals with very relevant technical skills. Reaching out to the SGA Network membership to facilitate their engagement in the matchmaking facility might be a very valuable contribution.
  18. BES-Net aims to promote dialogue between science, policy and practice and build capacity for more effective management of biodiversity (see IPBES/3/INF/19). It is expected that this will include: development of a web portal to increase access to tools, methods, best practice and lessons learned; face-to-face capacity building activities; and support for IPBES in establishing a matchmaking facility between funders, technical expertise and needs of the IPBES community. To deliver these activities BES-Net will build on existing networks and initiatives, and the SGA Network could be a useful partner in the delivery and support of some these activities.
  19. Finally, working with UNEP, the SGA Network is developing a major project to support national-level ecosystem assessments as building blocks for regional assessments, and as a mechanism for supporting the development of capacity within the context of IPBES. This is directly relevant to the draft list of priority capacity building needs (IPBES/3/3), and as the proposal is further developed it will be discussed with the Task Force on Capacity Building.
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