

## Report

### Second WABES West African Expert Workshop

#### UPTAKE OF THE IPBES AFRICA ASSESSMENT: REGIONAL AND NATIONAL VIEWS FROM THE WEST AFRICAN EXPERT NETWORK

June 19-21, 2018

University of Ghana, Legon, Accra



WABES – West African Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services is an initiative to facilitate networking and capacity-building across West Africa to support the Work Programme of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).



[www.wabes.org](http://www.wabes.org)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> June 2018, the 2nd regional workshop of the West African Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (WABES) project was held under the theme "*Uptake of the Africa Assessment: Regional and National views from the West African experts Network*" at the University of Ghana, Legon (Accra, Ghana). The objective of this three-day workshop was to facilitate networking activities of West African Experts for a better contribution of the region to the work programme of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), and particularly its thematic, methodological, regional and global assessments.

The first day of the workshop started with the opening ceremony by the panel consisting of Dr. George Owusu Essegbey (Representative of the Government of Ghana), Prof. Alfred Apau Oteng-Yeboah (President of WABES Advisory Board), Prof. Souleymane Konaté (Representative of the Director of CEA-CCBAD, UFHB), Prof. Christian Borgemeister (ZEF Director), Dr. Oblé Neya (Representative of WASCAL Executive Director), Mrs. Diem Hong Thi Tran (IPBES Secretariat) and Dr. Jan Henning Sommer (WABES Coordinator). This day was dedicated to the introduction to IPBES, WABES project and the Master programme SPIBES (Science Policy Interface on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services). It allowed participants (IPBES National Focal Points, scientists and biodiversity and ecosystem services experts) to express their difficulties and propose solutions to contribute to the implementation of the IPBES work programme and the WABES network.

The second day's program focused on new IPBES products including the capacity building rolling plan, new assessments and the review of the global assessments. It allowed participants to understand the IPBES capacity building programme and its rolling plan and the Africa assessment. This second day resulted in the development of strategies for the implementation of key messages of the IPBES Africa Assessment in West African countries by the country representatives.

The third day focused on the revision of the IPBES global assessment and the West African perspectives on the future of biodiversity and ecosystem services. A presentation on ways to integrate biodiversity and ecosystem services into decision-making processes strengthened participants' knowledge and perspectives on strategies for integrating biodiversity into national programmes.

A closing ceremony concluded this second workshop of experts within the framework of the WABES project through which participants communicated the need for WABES to get more involved in the process of participation of West African States in IPBES work programmes.

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## INTRODUCTION

The overall objective of the workshop was to facilitate networking activities among West African Experts in regard to better support the implementation of the Work Program of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), in particular its thematic, methodological and regional/global assessment.

Specifically, the workshop aimed at the following objectives:

- give opportunities to experts in the region to exchange information on IPBES-relevant topics and to be informed about IPBES activities and its developments (i.e., introduction to IPBES capacity building, etc.),
- establish or strengthen connection between West African Biodiversity and Ecosystem Service Experts in the context of IPBES,
- discuss with regional experts on proposition of strategies for the adoption of Africa evaluation by policy makers,
- inform participants of the ongoing review of the global assessment and get a better involvement of experts from the region in the review of the chapters of the global assessment, as well as the summary for policymakers.

Expected outputs included:

- the WABES project and the IPBES work program are known in the West African region and actions undertaken towards its implementation,
- participants have the opportunity to exchange information on IPBES-relevant topics and to strengthen networking activities,
- participants get a better idea on how to contribute to the IPBES process and how to make use of the capacity building activities of IPBES,
- participants proposed strategies for the implementation of key messages of the Africa Assessment in West African countries.

The workshop gave room for exchange between IPBES National Focal Points, researchers, practitioners and students from the Master program SPIBES. The participants actively worked on strengthening an expert network, which can contribute to IPBES capacities and bring forward the objectives of the WABES project. A special focus was on possibilities to contribute to the IPBES work program as a West African expert and ways about how to make use of the outputs of IPBES. Within three days, 66 participants from 20 countries discussed relevant issues related to biodiversity and ecosystem services.

## DAY 1: INTRODUCTION TO IPBES, WABES AND THE NEW SPIBES MASTER PROGRAMME

### *Summary of Day 1*

*After the opening ceremony, WABES coordinator Dr. Jan Henning Sommer gave an introduction to IPBES and Dr. Sylvestre Da presented the WABES project. Additionally, students from the SPIBES master programme gave updates from the last WABES workshop held in Abidjan in 2017. The master programme SPIBES was then introduced by Prof. Souleymane Konaté, followed by a summary of the outputs of the interactive working groups of the last workshop, presented by the Master students. This overview motivated the participants to take part in this year working groups, which meant to gather the participants expectations regarding the workshop and ideas on how to further develop the WABES expert network.*

*After the first day, the following outputs of the workshop were achieved:*

- ✓ *The IPBES work programme is known in the West African regional;*
- ✓ *The WABES project is known in the West African regional;*
- ✓ *Participants learn how to contribute to the IPBES process.*

### Introduction to IPBES and WABES

IPBES is an intergovernmental body that consists of delegates from different countries, who exchange in yearly plenaries in order to work towards four main IPBES actions: (i) assessments of global biodiversity and ecosystem services; (ii) identification of policy support tools; (iii) strengthen capacities and competencies to support IPBES work and (iv) knowledge building and communication & outreach. During the last IPBES plenary (IPBES-6) in Medellín, Columbia, the first IPBES work programme (2014-2018) was completed. In this context four regional and subregional assessments and one thematic assessment (on land degradation and restoration) were approved by the governments. Through this approval governments commit themselves to the assessments, which were prepared by more than 550 experts from over 100 countries. During the plenary, the second IPBES work programme was launched, as well as two new assessments: (1) a thematic assessment of the sustainable use of wild species and (2) an assessment on tools and methodologies regarding multiple values of biodiversity to human

societies. Call for nominations was launched and authors from all over the world can apply to be part of the IPBES process, in order to contribute to the assessments on a voluntary basis.

The WABES project was initiated to support the IPBES work programme and is independent from IPBES. Its main goals are to launch a West African network with experts on biodiversity and ecosystem services; and to develop a master programme (SPIBES) for applicants from all ECOWAS countries. The project is funded by the German Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) through its International Climate Initiative (IKI), which aims at implementing measures for biodiversity protection and climate change mitigation. Within the expert network, West African experts are supported to connect amongst each other and to the international IPBES community. This is achieved via yearly workshops in which experts get informed about the IPBES process and exchange on the needs and challenges of their countries. The first WABES workshop was held in Abidjan in 2017, where participants from 20 different countries elaborated the relevance of IPBES for their countries and got better insights into the IPBES work programme. The project aims at being sustainable by creating long term exchange between experts and stand as an example for future expert working groups in West Africa.

### Results from the first expert workshop on how to get involved in IPBES

Experts can engage in IPBES by: contributing to IPBES assessments or capacity-building, attending plenaries, raising awareness towards IPBES, teaching, conducting research or strengthening IPBES on an administrative level. Potential benefits of getting involved in IPBES are: being part of a platform for information sharing, capacity-building, the provision of policy support tools by IPBES and the promotion of sustainable management of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the country of action. The engagement can be financed through national funding and budgets, international funding by applying to international organizations, or looking for financial support from the private sector. Identified strategies for raising awareness for IPBES in West Africa include working with scientists, NGOs, policy makers or the broader public.

### Master Programme - SPIBES

The master programme SPIBES was created out of growing need for inter- and transdisciplinary research in West Africa, an area with strong interdependencies between biodiversity and human development. The programme will prepare and educate future experts on biodiversity and ecosystem

services to take part in the IPBES process and other science-policy interfaces. Scholarship is available for a maximum of 15 students, one from each ECOWAS country.

### Participants' expectations for the Workshop

The first working groups on participants' expectations were conducted to help shape the contents of the annual WABES workshops. The participants' opinions are very important for the success of the project, therefore participatory working groups are a main part of each WABES workshop, which are designed according to the participants' needs and ideas.

The expectations of the participants were gathered under the following lead questions:

1. *Which challenges with regard to the IPBES work programme are you facing in your countries?*

The participants identified a lack of knowledge on IPBES and its related processes in their countries and a need for capacity-building on IPBES. They highlighted the necessity to support national focal points and strengthen collaboration between stakeholders. Another challenge is a lack of finances and political will to implement the work programme, as well as a lack of collaboration and commitment by the national focal points.

2. *Which topics of the workshop are most relevant for you? Are there any missing topics?*

Overall the participants found various topics relevant for them; ranging from the session on the Africa Assessment; to the introduction to IPBES and WABES and the SPIBES master programme and to mainstreaming biodiversity. The following were identified as missing topics: strengthening of the role of the national focal point; indigenous and local knowledge (ILK); sessions on the already published assessments; more room for sharing experience on implementation in each country; an introduction to the IPBES fellowship programme and ways on how to get funding.

3. *What are your ideas to improve the WABES expert network in the future?*

The development of the WABES network through improved online communication was identified as very important. This could happen through an online platform for exchange, or a regular newsletter provided by WABES. The network could also be improved by increasing the collaboration between national focal points and SPIBES master students, so they can have more influence once finished with their studies. Another idea is a long-term funding mechanism to make the project more sustainable.



## DAY 2: INVOLVEMENT IN NEW IPBES OUTPUTS/ACTIVITIES: CAPACITY BUILDING ROLLING PLAN, REGIONAL UPTAKE OF THE AFRICA ASSESSMENT

### *Summary of Day 2:*

*The second day started with a presentation on IPBES capacity-building held by Mrs. Diem Hong Thi Tran from the IPBES secretariat. The presentation was followed by group work on ideas and needs regarding capacity-building and ways to address those needs. Dr. Cosmas Lambini later introduced the participants to the IPBES Africa Assessment and its summary for policy makers was presented by the SPIBES master students. The participants then split up into working groups to discuss on the national uptake of the Africa Assessment in their countries by developing a draft national implementation plan.*

*After the second day, the following outputs of the workshop were achieved:*

- ✓ *Participants knew how to make use of the capacity building activities of IPBES.*
- ✓ *Participants developed strategies for the implementation of key messages of the Africa Assessment in West African countries.*
- ✓ *Participants exchanged information on IPBES-relevant topics and strengthened networking activities.*

### IPBES capacity building

Capacity-building is one of the most important topics for African countries and one of the core functions of IPBES. IPBES works with the capacity-building rolling plan, which summarizes three strategies to build capacities and implement the first IPBES work programme. The capacity-building function focusses on the identification and prioritization of capacity-building needs, possibilities for collaboration with partners through the support of the uptake of IPBES assessments as well as networks and platforms on national level. This is done through capacity-building workshops for experts of the assessments and enhancing exchange of the national focal points with IPBES.

### Participants' opinions on capacity-building

The working groups on capacity-building were built on the before mentioned challenges in regard to implementing the IPBES work programme in the participants countries. Capacity-building is one of the main challenges in the IPBES process, which is why the IPBES secretariat created the capacity-building



rolling plan and task force. Understanding the needs and problems of different stakeholders is important for the success of the task force and helps them prioritize their approaches for capacity-building.

The groups work according to the following lead questions:

1. Suggest possible capacity-building activities that can address these challenges. The following ideas were gathered in order to address the before mentioned challenges: initiate training on resource mobilization, project development and management; integrate a training of trainers approach.
2. Discuss how the activities can be carried out and what kind of resources you would need for implementing these activities.

Financial constrains could be remedied through donor identification and finding alternative sources for funding (e.g. UNDP country programme) or lobbying for government funding, accompanied by proposal development and submission. A lack of awareness on IPBES could be removed through the development of a communication plan which enhances networking between different stakeholders and the establishment of a national platform on IPBES related topics. Political will and commitment could be improved by organizing a workshop specifically for political decision-makers; whereas the motivation of national focal points could be increased through enhancing collaboration with other conventions (e.g. Ramsar, CBD).

### The IPBES Africa Assessment

The regional assessment for Africa was recently approved by the governments on IPBES-6. The assessment is meant to support the African Union to meet its Agenda 2063; as well as national governments, subregional political and economical groups and other stakeholders to work towards the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem services. An assessment goes through several steps before it can be approved. Each step is accompanied by either experts or governments or both, whereas the final draft of the assessment and the summary for policy makers is reviewed by the governments in order to increase ownership and their commitment for the key notes of the assessment. IPBES thereby also includes other knowledge system, such as indigenous and local knowledge (ILK), and takes into account the multidimensional nature of biodiversity and ecosystem services. These aspects and the variety of scenarios and models in each IPBES assessments, make the process unique from other assessments.

### Participants ideas on the national uptake of the Africa Assessment

In this session, participants came together according to their countries of residence and developed a draft national implementation plan for the Africa Assessment in their country. The work of IPBES cannot be sustainable if the outputs of the assessments are not implemented on national level. Yet, the implementation of these is one of the main challenges of the IPBES process. This session aimed at giving the participants room for exchange on ideas on how to implement the Africa Assessment.

*During the session, the following subjects were identified as most important for the national uptake of the Africa Assessment:*

Food-energy-water-livelihood nexus; land degradation; climate-related risks; nature capital; invasive species; sustainable agriculture; sustainable use of natural resources and local livelihood improvement; values for biodiversity and natures contributions to people.

*Following needs for action were also identified:*

Set up and strengthen national platforms to assure the function of IPBES on national level; mobilize IPBES stakeholders; mobilize financial resources; integrate IPBES priorities into national development plans; improve coordination between different stakeholders; raise awareness on IPBES related topics in the countries and monitor and evaluate the implementation process.

## DAY 3: ADOPTING AND UPCOMING ASSESSMENTS, MAINSTREAMING BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEMS SERVICES INTO DECISION MAKING PROCESSES

### *Summary of Day 3:*

*The last day of the workshop started with a presentation on the IPBES working group on Scenarios and Models by Dr. Jennifer Hauck. The participants then went into working groups, where they discussed different West African perspectives on visions developed by the IPBES working group. Later, Dr Agnes Hallosserie presented the IPBES Global Assessment and initiated an exercise on how to successfully comment an assessment in the review process. The workshop ended with a presentation by Mr. Abisha*

*Mapendembe on mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystem services into decision making processes and the closing ceremony.*

*After the third day, the following outputs of the workshop were achieved:*

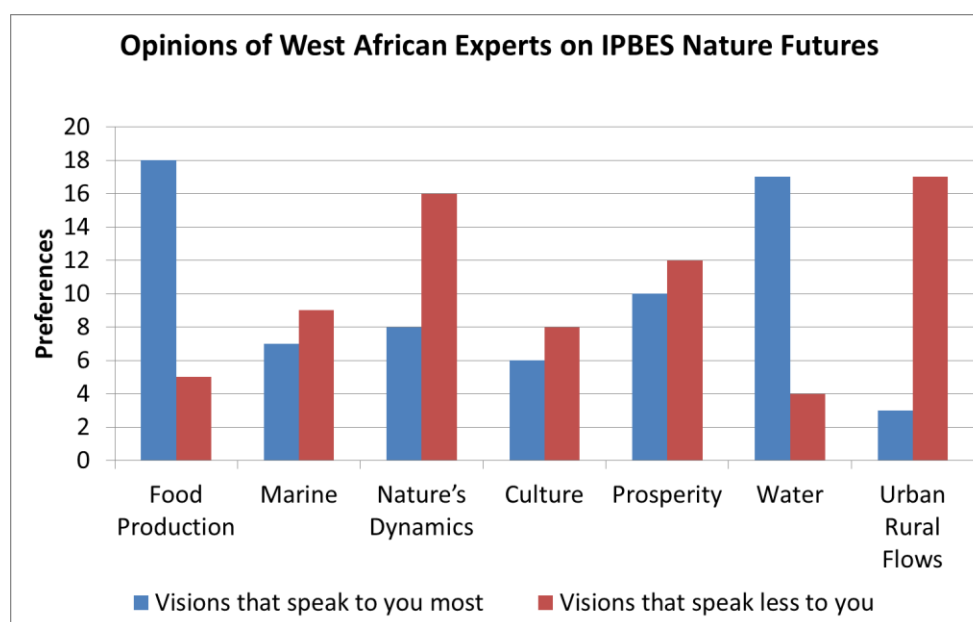
- ✓ *Participants get a better idea on how to contribute to the IPBES process.*
- ✓ *Participants exchange on IPBES relevant topics and strengthen networking.*

### **The IPBES working group on Scenarios & Models**

The IPBES working group on Scenarios & Models has been created to provide advice on scenarios & models for assessments and develop new IPBES scenarios. IPBES scenarios are based on positive visions for human relationships with nature. They include multiple scales and knowledge systems and integrate interlinkages between biodiversity and ecosystem services and human well-being. Seven positive visions were created by the expert working group, which focus on the following topics: prosperity and community-based natural resource management; sustainable food production ; urban-rural flows; water; culture; nature's dynamics and sustainable marine ecosystems.

### **Participants opinions on IPBES Scenarios**

During this session, participants discussed on the seven visions created by the IPBES working group on Scenarios & Models. The objective of the session was to gather participants' opinions on the relevance of the visions for their countries and collect ideas on visions which are missing. Figure 1 shows the opinions of the experts on the relevance of the different visions.



*Figure 1: Opinions of experts on IPBES visions*

In addition to that, the participants also suggested visions, which were missing in their opinion. These included the following:

Placing economic value on biodiversity to guarantee its conservation; land management or the right of nature to occupy space; renewable energy; traditional medicine and ILK; conservation of animals; gender equality; clean technology; a right of nature; good governance; climate mitigation; poverty alleviation and sustainable livelihoods; attitudinal and behavioral change; natural resource conservation; sustainable mining.

## The IPBES Global Assessment

The IPBES global assessment is currently under peer-review by experts from all around the world. In order to contribute to the reviewing process, an expert need to register as a reviewer (online under [www.ipbes.net](http://www.ipbes.net)). He/she can then access all chapters of the assessment and the summary for policy makers and review them. In a review process, the expert fills in an Excel form provided by IPBES, in which he/she formulates a comment and clearly states where it's located in the assessment. The comment sheet is then sent to the authors of the assessment, who review and reply to each comment. Reviewing assessments is a vital component of the IPBES process and can be very helpful for the authors, if the comments are formulated in a constructive and concrete way. The reviewing process is hence a good possibility to contribute to IPBES. During this session, the participants of the workshop learned how to write good comments, which can later be send to the authors of the global assessment.

## Mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystem services into decision making processes

Mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystem services into policies is essential for achieving sustainable development. It maximizes positive contributions of different sectors to biodiversity conservation and aims at achieving sectoral and wider policy objectives in a more sustainable way by increasing policy effectiveness and get ‘win-win’ solutions. Mainstreaming biodiversity can thereby happen on three levels: on the conceptual level, documents underpinning national and sectoral policies explicitly or implicitly take biodiversity into account; on the operational level, measures or instruments are identified and in place for biodiversity mainstreaming within national or sector policies; and on the implementation level, measures achieve mainstreaming on the ground in actual policy- and decision-making situations. Means for mainstreaming biodiversity are: Information instruments, such as data and indicators; decision-support instruments, such as reporting and impact assessments; and implementation instruments, such as legislative acts, public investment and market-based instruments. To successfully mainstream biodiversity one has to learn the language of the sectors one wants to engage with, work towards mutually beneficial outcomes, develop flexible and robust products that enable translation of science into the language of the sectors one engages with, build trust in the products and maintain their stability and quality, don’t invent new solutions for every new application and don’t radically change the advice too often.

## **APPENDIX**

Appendix 1 : Workshop agenda

Appendix 2 : Communiqué

Appendix 3 : List of participants

Appendix 4: Some pictures

## Agenda: Second WABES expert workshop

University of Ghana, Legon, Accra

June 19-21, 2018

### Objective

The overall objective of the workshop is to facilitate networking activities among West African Experts in regard to better support the implementation of the Work Program of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), in particular its thematic, methodological and regional/global assessment.

### Expected Outputs

- The WABES project and the IPBES work programme are known in the West African region and actions undertaken towards its implementation
- Participants have the opportunity to exchange information on IPBES-relevant topics and to strengthen networking activities
- Participants get a better idea on how to contribute to the IPBES process and how to make use of the capacity building activities of IPBES
- Strategy for the implementation of key messages of the Africa Assessment in West African countries

### Schedule

Day 1 – Tuesday, 19 June: Introduction to IPBES and WABES, the new SPIBES Master programme		
Time	Session	Chair/Presenter
8.00-9.00	Registration of guests	
09.00-10.30	Opening Ceremony <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome address by the Chairman of WABES Advisory Board (Prof. Alfred Oteng-Yeboah)</li> <li>• Address of the IPBES Secretariat (Mrs. Diem Hong Thi Tran)</li> <li>• Speech of WABES Coordinator (Dr. Jan Henning Sommer)</li> <li>• Address of the Representative of the Director of CEA-CBAD, UFHB (Prof. Souleymane Konaté)</li> <li>• Address of Director of ZEF (Prof. Christian Borgemeister)</li> <li>• Speech of the WASCAL ED (represented by Dr. Oblé Neya)</li> <li>• Opening Speech of the Representative of the Government of Ghana (Dr.</li> </ul>	MC: Dr. Sylvestre Da



	George Owusu Essegbey, Director of the CSIR-STEPRI) • Introduction of participants: Icebreaker	
<b>10.30-11.00</b>	<b>Coffee break and photo session</b>	
11.00 – 12.30	Introduction to IPBES & WABES • Introduction to IPBES and Updates from the last plenary • Introduction to WABES project • Updates from the last WABES workshop in Abidjan in 2017 • Plenary discussion / Q&A	Chair: Prof. Alfred Oteng- Yeboah  Presenters: Dr Henning Sommer & Dr Sylvestre Da
<b>12.30-13.30</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	
13:30-15:00	SPIBES Master Programme • Introduction and overview of Programme • Overview by master students on the participative working groups of the last workshop • Q&A	Chair : Mrs. Jewel Kudjau  Presenters: Prof. Souleymane Konaté & SPIBES Students
<b>15.00-15.30</b>	<b>Coffee</b>	
15:30-16:15	Participants' Expectations • Working groups: Participants express expectations regarding the workshop and how to further develop the WABES Expert network	Chair : Dr. Isimemen Osemwegie  Facitators of WG : Dr Jennifer Hauck Dr Isimemen Osemwegie & Dr Sylvestre Da Dr Agnes Hallosserie M. Abisha Mapendembe
16:15-17:00	Report from working groups	Dr. Isimemen Osemwegie
<b>Day 2 – Wednesday 20 June: Involvement in new IPBES outputs/activities: Capacity building rolling plan, Regional uptake of the Africa assessment</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Chair/Presenter</b>
09.00-10.30	IPBES capacity building Rolling Plan • Introduction to the IPBES capacity building rolling plan • Group work: Ideas on needs and ways to address those needs from the participants regarding capacity building • Report from Working Groups	Chair: Prof. Alfred Oteng- Yeboah  Presenter: Mrs. Diem Hong Thi Tran, IPBES  Group facilitators: Dr Isimemen Osemwegie, Dr Agnes Hallosserie, Dr Cosmas Kombat Lambini, Dr Jan Henning Sommer
<b>10.30-11.00</b>	<b>Coffee</b>	
11:00 – 12:30	The IPBES Africa Assessment from a West African perspective	Chair: Mr. Abisha Mapendembe

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introducing the Summary for Policymakers (SPM) of the African Assessment</li> <li>Working groups on national uptake</li> </ul>	Presenters: Dr. Cosmas Kombat Lambini, SPIBES Master' Students, Dr. Jan Henning Sommer  Working Group organizer: Dr Jan Henning Sommer
<b>12.30-13.30</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	
13.30-15.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue work from the morning session</li> <li>Development of a draft national implementation plan for the Africa assessment</li> </ul>	Chair: Dr. Jennifer Hauck
<b>15.00-15.30</b>	<b>Coffee</b>	
15.30-16.30	Report from the working groups	Chair: Mr. Abisha Mapendembe
16.30-17:00	Collecting input for the Communiqué	Chair: Dr. Jan Henning Sommer
<b>Day 3 – Thursday 21 June: Adopting and upcoming assessments, Mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystems services into decision making processes</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Chair/Presenter</b>
9.00-10.00	The IPBES Expert Group on Scenarios and Models: Working groups on West African perspectives	Chair: Dr Arsene Alain Sanon  Presenter: Dr. Jennifer Hauck
10:00-10 :30	Report from working groups	Dr. Jennifer Hauck
<b>10.30-11.00</b>	<b>Coffee</b>	
11:00 – 12.30	The IPBES global assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the global assessment?</li> <li>How to contribute to the review process?</li> </ul>	Chair: Dr. Agnes Hallosserie
<b>12.30-13.30</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	
13.30-15.00	Mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystems services into decision making processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation and Q&amp;A</li> </ul>	Chair: Prof. Souleymane Konaté  Presenter: Mr. Abisha Mapendembe
15.00-16.00	Closing Ceremony, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation of the communiqué (by participants)</li> <li>words by Prof. Alfred Oteng-Yeboah</li> <li>Reflections by Dr. Jan Henning Sommer</li> <li>Closing of the workshop by Dr. George Owusu Essegbey</li> </ul>	MC: Dr. Sylvestre Da
	Coffee and drinks	



**2<sup>ND</sup> WABES WEST AFRICAN EXPERT WORKSHOP**  
**UPTAKE OF THE IPBES AFRICA ASSESSMENT: REGIONAL AND NATIONAL VIEWS FROM THE WEST**  
**AFRICAN EXPERTS NETWORK**

**ACCRA, GHANA, JUNE 19-21, 2018**

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## **FINAL COMMUNIQUE**

WABES is an initiative to facilitate networking and capacity-building across West Africa with the aim to support the West African contribution to the Work Programs of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), and in particular the overarching goal is to connect Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services experts from West African universities, research institutions, and existing science-policy interfaces. Annually conducted workshops will act as exchange platforms and as distribution hubs for IPBES developments, supplemented by discussion groups to connect experts and policy makers across West Africa and beyond.

The second WABES experts workshop was organized in Accra (Ghana) on June 19-21, 2018. The workshop was attended by 66 experts from 20 countries from West Africa and beyond (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Germany, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, United Kingdom, Liberia, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Togo and Zimbabwe). Amongst the participants, were many IPBES focal points, IPBES representatives, researchers, representatives from research institutions, NGOs as well as from the policy sector. The participants highly appreciated the new SPIBES Master program, which currently has 15 students, and implemented by WABES as a valuable way to develop capacities and foster mutual exchanges at the national level between participating countries. The workshop was conducted in a participatory way through several working groups, panels and interactive presentations. The participants highlighted the relevance of IPBES for West Africa as a region exceptionally rich in biodiversity, and in many regards dependent on nature's contributions to people.

The workshop addressed the following objectives:

**1. THE WABES PROJECT AND THE IPBES WORK PROGRAMME ARE KNOWN IN THE WEST AFRICAN REGION AND ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN TOWARDS ITS IMPLEMENTATION**

The participants appreciated the goals and roles being played by the WABES program and in particular its experts workshops. WABES contributes substantially towards increasing the awareness of IPBES

and its work programs in the West Africa region. This notwithstanding, there is still the dire need to create awareness of IPBES beyond the community of experts. The relevance of considering biodiversity and nature's contributions to people in regard to sustainable development and long-term economic growth needs to be highlighted and better implemented in national policies. The participants acknowledged that their knowledge of IPBES, its objectives, work programs and relevant outputs have been enhanced through this second WABES experts workshop. WABES contributes to the development of initiatives towards the implementation of relevant IPBES outputs. The participants also appreciate the diverse background of participants in attendance, however, WABES is encouraged to find mechanisms to address and incorporate views and perceptions of far more audience from the scientific communities, NGOs, indigenous and local knowledge holders, and other relevant stakeholders. Moreover, the participants proposed best approaches to conduct further mainstreaming activities and ways to reach out to different target groups including policy and the private sectors, as well as universities and research institutions.

## **2. PARTICIPANTS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION ON IPBES-RELEVANT TOPICS AND TO STRENGTHEN NETWORKING ACTIVITIES**

The workshop was graced by the presence of several experts from IPBES, notable representatives from the secretariat's technical support unit (TSU) on capacity building, the IPBES Bureau, national IPBES focal points, authors contributing to the African and other assessments, the IPBES fellow program amongst others. The IPBES work programme was introduced through several presentations, discussions, and interactive working groups. The attendance and commitment of the several IPBES experts contributed to a profound understanding of IPBES, its functions, and outputs. The workshop provided ample opportunities to facilitate networking activities through interactive sessions and discussion groups, where individual views were expressed, and common ideas developed. The participants were happy for this opportunity and expressed interest in more of such opportunities for exchanges regarding IPBES relevant topics. However, the participants stressed that adequate funding and all-round support from their government would go a long way to improve the capability of the national focal points to contribute to networking activities. Moreover, the participants encouraged WABES to improve on its existing online platform as this presents a further opportunity for information exchange and networking.

## **3. PARTICIPANTS GET A BETTER IDEA ON HOW TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE IPBES PROCESS AND HOW TO MAKE USE OF THE CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES OF IPBES**

The participants stated that the workshop was an eye opener on how to contribute to the IPBES process. During interactive working group sessions, the participants exchanged ideas on how to engage in IPBES capacity building, the uptake of the IPBES Africa assessments and the evaluation of the global assessment. The participants felt well informed about the capacity building activities of IPBES and expressed interest to make contributions to the implementation of capacity building activities in their various countries. At the same time, challenges were also highlighted inclusive of difficulties to procure sufficient funding to intensify those activities, as knowledge of IPBES objectives is still very limited. To overcome this, the participants expressed the necessity of implementing national platforms to support the national focal points in their countries to help better connect to the IPBES process and facilitate the mainstreaming of IPBES relevant topics. In this regard, it is relevant to provide policy tools adapted to national policies and peculiarities.

#### **4. STRATEGY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF KEY MESSAGES OF THE AFRICA ASSESSMENT IN WEST AFRICAN COUNTRIES**

The participants stressed the need for a proper uptake of the key messages of the IPBES Africa assessment as this is crucial for West Africa. Participants highlighted key messages in the Summary for Policy Makers (SPM) that are relevant at the national level in their countries, and jointly developed national roadmaps to facilitate the uptake. Participants also highlighted the need for joint collaboration between their national focal points and relevant science and policy stakeholders in their countries. Regarding the mainstreaming process, the participants stated that there are still language barriers to overcome. Some IPBES materials and some working groups are in English language only, and this prevents non-English speakers from a more effective participation in the IPBES process.

#### **5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS BY THE PARTICIPANTS**

Participants express their sincere gratitude to the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety (BMU) for its interest in the West African region and the establishment of WABES, and the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) for supporting this workshop and its objectives. All participants affirm their interests and commitments to WABES and its implementation. The participants are grateful to the organizers of this second experts workshop for providing the necessary facilities and pleasant working atmosphere. The participants express their sincere thanks to the Government of Ghana, the University of Ghana as well as WASCAL for hosting the workshop.

**Accra, June 21st 2018**

**The Participants**

### APPENDIX 3

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#### APPENDIX 4: Some pictures of the workshop



The presidium at the opening ceremony



An overview of participants in plenary



Group picture





Working group session



Reading of the communiqué by participants



Presentation of certificate of participation



Acknowledgement and closing remarks by the Representative of the Government of Ghana