



Mainstreaming Biodiversity: concept and work under the Convention

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

This note provides an overview of the provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) relevant to biodiversity mainstreaming, as well as a snapshot of relevant past work under the Convention. It also quotes concepts or definitions from other international organizations and provides a succinct overview on pertinent views expressed at the post-2020 process so far. The note does not claim to provide a comprehensive picture or a formal definition; rather, its objective is to contribute to a common understanding of biodiversity mainstreaming and how it can be implemented by governments, the private sector, indigenous peoples and local communities, and other major groups and stakeholders across cross-cutting and sectorial policies, in the context of the work of the Informal Advisory Group on Mainstreaming and the 9th Trondheim Conference, in the context of the establishment of a long-term strategic approach to mainstreaming that has been decided by the Conference of the Parties at its fourteenth meeting.¹

Parties to the Convention and numerous stakeholders have already undertaken significant efforts and made progress in mainstreaming biodiversity. Parties recognized the importance to make further progress, for instance at the United Nations Biodiversity Conference in Cancun in 2016², where ministers and other heads of delegations stated that *“life on planet Earth and our common future are at stake. It is urgent to take strong actions in a responsible manner to ensure the survival of biological wealth and healthy ecosystems that support human development and well-being. We must strive to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the 2050 Vision of Living in Harmony with Nature. Therefore, we must raise the level of ambition and political will for mainstreaming the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources”* (Cancun Declaration, 2016).

¹ Decision 14/3.

² Thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and second meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing, 4 to 17 December 2016; High-level ministerial segment of the meetings, 2 and 3 December 2016, Cancun, Mexico.



I. The overarching mandate for mainstreaming under the Convention

Biodiversity mainstreaming is generally understood as ensuring that biodiversity, and the services it provides, are appropriately and adequately factored into policies and practices that rely and have an impact on it. The Convention³ text itself contains several relevant provisions.

The second and third objectives of the Convention on the sustainable use of biodiversity and its components, and on the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources, already speak directly to mainstreaming. Conservation can also be an important element of mainstreaming action.

In Article 6 (b), the Convention calls upon Parties to “*integrate, as far as possible and as appropriate, the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies*”. Article 10(a) calls upon Parties to “*integrate consideration of the conservation and sustainable use of biological resources into national decision-making*”.⁴ Other articles of the Convention also promote “mainstreaming” – or provide tools for it – notably the requirements to use impact assessment (Article 14), incentive measures (Article 11) and to regulate or manage processes and activities that have significant adverse impacts on biodiversity (Articles 7(c) and 8(l)). Article 10(c) and the further work on customary sustainable use highlights in particular the important role of indigenous peoples and local communities in maintaining genetic diversity, reducing habitat and biodiversity loss and promoting an equitable and participatory approach to the management and restoration of critical ecosystems as an important element of mainstreaming – for instance, the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities can play a critical role for achieving sustainable agriculture, through approaches such as diversification, ecological rotation and agroforestry, and promotion of community and family farming alongside agroecology.

In decision X/25, the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, held in October 2010, in Nagoya, Japan, adopted a revised and updated Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, for the 2011-2020 period. In this Strategic Plan, Goal A calls to “*address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society*”. There are four Aichi Biodiversity Targets (ABTs) under Goal A: ABT 1 on awareness of the value of biodiversity, ABT 2 on

³ Convention on Biological Diversity (1992)

⁴ For the linkages between the concepts of integration and of mainstreaming, see the discussion on the current Strategic Plan below.

⁵ COP 10 Decision X/2 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020



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integrating biodiversity values into development and poverty alleviation strategies and plans (decision X/6)⁶, and national accounting systems, ABT 3 on addressing incentives, including subsidies, harmful to biodiversity and creating positive ones; and ABT 4 on promoting sustainable consumption and production.

Many of the other Aichi Biodiversity Targets are also relevant to the mainstreaming of biodiversity, because of the linkages to specific economic sectors, such as for instance ABT 6 (sustainable management of fisheries), ABT 7 (agriculture, aquaculture and forestry) and ABT 13 (on maintaining genetic diversity), or because of the linkages to broader economic policies, such as ABT 8 (on addressing pollution), ABT 9 (on addressing invasive alien species), ABT 14 (on restoring and safeguarding ecosystem which provide essential services), and ABT 20 (on resource mobilization).

The Conference of the Parties (COP) has established seven thematic programmes of work⁷ which correspond to some of the major biomes on the planet. Each programme establishes a vision for, and basic principles to guide future work, and contain provisions closely related to the mainstreaming of biodiversity, for instance in the programmes of work on Agricultural Biodiversity, Forest Biodiversity and Inland Waters Biodiversity (refer to the appendix for links to more detailed information). In addition, the work on many cross-cutting issues, such as Biodiversity for Development, Climate Change and Biodiversity, Economics and Incentive Measures, Health & Biodiversity, Impact Assessment, Invasive Alien Species, and Biodiversity and Tourism Development, have direct relevance to mainstreaming.

The numerous decisions addressing issues associated with mainstreaming arising under these areas are referred to throughout the text, and an overview is provided in annex B.

II. Elements, concepts and definitions of biodiversity mainstreaming by international organizations

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN,2018), defines biodiversity mainstreaming as *“the integration of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in economic cross-sectoral plans such as those related to sustainable development, poverty reduction, climate change adaptation and/or mitigation, as well as trade, innovation and investment promotion, and international cooperation”*. The

⁶ COP 10 Decision X/6 Integration of biodiversity into poverty eradication and development

⁷ Thematic Programmes and Cross-Cutting Issues <https://www.cbd.int/programmes/>





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IUCN also specifies that *“the concept of mainstreaming also applies to sector-specific plans such as agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, forestry, tourism, mining, energy, infrastructure and construction, health, water, banking, telecommunications, information and transport (among others). Ultimately, biodiversity mainstreaming implies transformational changes in development models, strategies and paradigms”*. Several elements of this definition are reflected in Aichi Biodiversity Target 2.

The Global Environmental Facility (GEF, 2018) states that mainstreaming is *“the process of embedding biodiversity considerations into policies, strategies and practices of key public and private actors that impact or rely on biodiversity, so that it is conserved and sustainably used both locally and globally”*.

The FAO’s Biodiversity Mainstreaming Platform, concerning the agricultural sectors, notes that mainstreaming is *“the process of embedding biodiversity considerations into all policies, strategies and practices that are adopted by public and private actors who either depend on biodiversity or whose actions have an impact on biodiversity. The purpose of mainstreaming biodiversity in the agriculture sectors is to ensure that biodiversity is conserved and used sustainably”*.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) states that *“mainstreaming, in the context of biodiversity, means integrating actions or policies related to biodiversity into broader development processes or policies such as those aimed at poverty reduction, or tackling climate change.”*

Hence, biodiversity mainstreaming involves many layers, embedded into regional, national and local policies, and reflected in the operations of major groups and other stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and local communities as well as women, children and youth, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, and academia, who all play their part in mainstreaming biodiversity. The IUCN definition, as well as the latest IPBES report⁸, also provide an important note of urgency: only transformative change in the mechanisms currently influencing development, climate and investment decisions, and in which businesses operate, can unlock the reversal needed for the steep rate of loss of biodiversity globally. The IPBES report clearly states that: *“Goals for conserving and sustainably using nature and achieving sustainability cannot be met by current trajectories, and goals for 2030 and beyond may only be achieved through transformative changes across economic, social, political and technological factors”* (Díaz, Settele, Brondízio et al., 2019, p.5), further defining

⁸ Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services





transformative change as “a fundamental, system-wide reorganization across technological, economic and social factors, including paradigms, goals and values” (Díaz, Settele, Brondízio et al., 2019, p.5).

III. Related work streams under the Convention

Impact Assessment

Further to Article 14 of the Convention, Parties adopted, in decision VIII/28⁹, voluntary guidelines for biodiversity-inclusive impact assessment. An analysis on how these guidelines were applied and reflected in impact assessment policies at national and international levels was prepared for the Subsidiary Body on Implementation at its second meeting (see document CBD/SBSTTA/21/INF/13)¹⁰. The report concludes that these guidelines were taken into account both in voluntary guidance documents and in regulations. However, more emphasis could be given to the role of impact assessment as an instrument to pursue the objectives of the Convention. Accordingly, decision 14/3 recognized that opportunities exist for the wider application of biodiversity-inclusive impact assessments and encouraged Parties to apply best practices on environmental impact assessments including the voluntary guidelines (paragraphs 8 and 13 (c)).

Incentive measures

Further to Article 11 of the Convention, ABT 3 calls upon Parties to eliminate, phase out, or reform by 2020, at the latest, incentives, including subsidies, harmful to biodiversity in order to minimize or avoid negative impacts, and to develop and apply positive incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, consistent and in harmony with the Convention and other relevant international obligations, taking into account national socio economic conditions. Further guidance was provided by decisions X/44 and XI/30, as well as the milestones for implementing ABT 3 adopted by COP-12 in decision XII/3 on resource mobilization. A progress report was prepared for the Subsidiary Body on Implementation at its second meeting (CBD/SBI/2/INF/15)¹¹. According to the note, some progress is being made towards implementation of Aichi Target 3 and the application of the associated milestones, however progress is overall insufficient, and significantly more policy action could be done by Parties and other governments, with support by relevant international organizations and initiatives. Accordingly, decision 14/22

⁹ COP 8 Decision VIII/28 Impact assessment: Voluntary guidelines on biodiversity-inclusive impact assessment

¹⁰ Available under <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/SBSTTA-21>.

¹¹ Available under <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/SBI-02>





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encouraged Parties and other Governments to intensify their efforts to implement measures for the full implementation of Aichi Biodiversity Target 3 (paragraph 10).

Business engagement

Decision X/21 and subsequent decisions (XI/7, XII/10, and XIII/3): call upon governments to, *inter alia*, promote public policies enabling private-sector engagement and the mainstreaming of biodiversity into corporate strategies and decision-making; develop, and report on, national activities that promote and facilitate the mainstreaming of biodiversity by business; encourage involvement of businesses as stakeholders in any future revision and implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans; and adopt sustainability criteria for government purchases of products of biological resources.

The decisions call for legal frameworks, policies and practices to be reviewed and when appropriate, updated to foster the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in socio-economic and business policies and planning, including through incentives for best practices in supply chains, sustainable production and consumption and measures at the scale of sites or production plants, requiring reporting by businesses on biodiversity dependencies and impacts, strengthening voluntary disclosures, and adopting or updating laws on sustainable procurement, and similar policies to shift markets towards more sustainable products and technologies.

Resource mobilization

Further to Article 20 of the Convention and ABT 20, Parties at COP-13 adopted targets for resource mobilization and provided further implementation guidance (decision XIII/3). The decision links elements of biodiversity mainstreaming with the provision of financial resources. Specifically, target 1 (a) aim to double international biodiversity-related finance flows to developing countries by 2015 “including through a country-driven prioritization of biodiversity within development plans in recipient countries.” Target 1 (b) calls for Parties to include “biodiversity in their national priorities or development plans by 2015, and to have therefore made appropriate domestic financial provisions.” The proposals for concrete and effective actions for implementing ABT 20 and associated financial targets, contained in Annex IV of the decision, take note of the significant interlinkages and potential synergies between Aichi Biodiversity Target 20 and other elements of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, and in particular its Strategic Goal A to address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity, as essential enabling conditions for the effective mobilization of resources from all sources. Note CBD/SBI/2/INF/15 also





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provided an analysis how the implementation of ABT 3 on incentive measures can also contribute to the implementation of ABT 20 on resource mobilization.

COP-13 also adopted voluntary guidelines on safeguards in biodiversity financing mechanisms (decision XIII/3, Annex III), with a view to promote the positive effects and avoid or mitigate unintended negative effects on biodiversity and livelihoods, including of local communities and indigenous peoples, and further developed a checklist for consideration by Parties, other stakeholder organizations and other institutions (decision 14/15¹², Annex).

Focus on sectors

Parties at COP-13 and COP-14 considered, respectively, the mainstreaming of biodiversity into agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, forestry, and tourism (decision XIII/3¹³), as well as energy and mining, infrastructure, manufacturing and processing, and health (decision 14/3 and 14/4)¹⁴. In preparing these decisions, a number of documents were prepared for the consideration by the relevant meetings of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice and the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, and the wealth of material contained therein can also inform the further work.

IV. Mainstreaming in the post-2020 process

COP 14 decision 14/3 decided to establish a long-term strategic approach to mainstreaming biodiversity. The decision also established an Informal Advisory Group that will advise the Secretariat and the bureau on the further development of the proposal for a long-term approach to mainstreaming biodiversity, including on ways to integrate mainstreaming adequately into the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

The recent regional consultations on the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, as well as written submissions received by the Secretariat, discussed the concept and emphasized the critical

¹² COP 14 Decision 15/15 Safeguards in biodiversity financing mechanisms

¹³ COP 13 Decision XIII/3 Strategic actions to enhance the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, including with respect to mainstreaming and the integration of biodiversity within and across sectors

¹⁴ COP 14 Decision 14/3 Mainstreaming of biodiversity in the energy and mining, infrastructure, manufacturing and processing sectors AND Decision 14/4 Health and biodiversity





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importance of mainstreaming, calling for greater clarity in its various components. Parties noted that mainstreaming is still a challenge and provided suggestions on approaches for improvements; participants from the African region also listed possible causes for these challenges and suggested several strategies to address them.

Views of Parties submitted in May 2019 illustrated the importance of further operationalizing biodiversity mainstreaming for better implementation. Components and enabling elements included resource mobilization, technology transfer and capacity building and promoting participation. Parties and partners also provided insight on an integrated approach to mainstreaming in the sectors of forestry, fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, energy and mining, infrastructure, manufacturing and processing sectors, at national, regional and international levels as well as the promotion of innovative solutions. Parties and other organizations noted that there is limited integration and mainstreaming in global processes and national-level implementation, and that there is a need to strengthen biodiversity mainstreaming by incorporating biodiversity values in national planning and development processes, sectors, policy and decision-making. In terms of general views, Parties noted voluntary contributions as a means to improve biodiversity mainstreaming.

Parties also noted the need to develop mechanisms to ensure consultation with key stakeholders and sectors to develop mainstreaming plans. Suggested tools and approaches for mainstreaming included the Chennai Guidance for the Integration of Biodiversity and Poverty Eradication, natural capital accounting, landscape and sea scape approaches, the Sharm el Sheikh to Kunming Action Agenda and the FAO Biodiversity Mainstreaming Platform. Parties noted that the lack of mainstreaming was a hindrance to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and that this should be addressed in the future framework, through innovative ways to integrate biodiversity in the economic sectors.

These views and the elements identified therein will need to be taken into consideration in the development of the long-term strategic approach to mainstreaming and the consideration on how to reflect mainstreaming appropriately in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.





Annex A

Decision 14/3 Mainstreaming of biodiversity in the energy and mining, infrastructure, manufacturing and processing sectors

Annex I of the decision identifies areas for development of a Long-Term Strategic Approach to Mainstreaming Biodiversity. Accordingly, the Executive Secretary should:

- a) Identify existing practices, guidelines, methodologies, experiences and tools related to biodiversity mainstreaming, and other strategic actions, in particular within the provisions and decisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity, in planning and decision making in these sectors;
- b) Consider how the existing programmes of the Convention on Biological Diversity, those of relevant partner organizations and initiatives, might better contribute to such a long-term strategic approach with respect to capacity-building, among other things, and identification of existing gaps in areas of work that are important for mainstreaming of biodiversity;
- c) Continue to engage in key international processes, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The following areas and actions, among others, are identified for inclusion in shaping the Long-term Strategic Approach, as a key element of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework:

- Review the effectiveness of different mainstreaming practices that have been used, as well as the steps necessary to scale up their use, including in health education, national legislation and policies, among other strategic tools;
- Undertake research and analysis on the extent to which mainstreaming approaches are being used by Parties, and identification of major gaps, obstacles and challenges;
- Contribute to efforts with respect to the internalization of the importance and the values of biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, in accordance with decision X/3, paragraph 9(b)(ii);
- Contribute to the efforts to develop and apply science-based indicators with respect to mainstreaming approaches;
- Identifying capacity-building and training needs for mainstreaming biodiversity at the regional, subregional, national, subnational and local levels, as well as related to specific economic sectors or subsectors;
- Identify opportunities to facilitate technical and scientific cooperation on mainstreaming, financial support and technology transfer;





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- Identify opportunities to develop new partnerships and strengthening of existing partnerships, including with cities and subnational governments, to achieve further progress in mainstreaming of biodiversity;
- Identify possible mechanisms to monitor the implementation of actions to advance the mainstreaming of biodiversity at the national, subnational and local levels, such as, for the local level, the Singapore Index on Cities' Biodiversity;
- Design a strategy to foster the engagement of the business and finance sectors on mainstreaming of biodiversity;
- Identifying cost-effective practices, guidelines, methodologies, experiences and tools related to biodiversity mainstreaming, and other strategic actions, in order to enhance the implementation of the Convention;
- Identifying obstacles that hinder mainstreaming of biodiversity in regulations, processes, policies and programmes at the national, subnational and local levels;
- Identifying options and solutions to overcome these obstacles to mainstreaming of biodiversity;
- Identifying key tasks as well as challenges and gaps in addressing these actions;
- Suggesting priority actions, timeframes and relevant actors;
- Identifying areas where additional work might be desirable in order to achieve further progress on mainstreaming under the Convention;
- Providing any other relevant advice, including on other initiatives or developments, meetings and other opportunities, to help further this work.





Annex B

Selection of relevant decisions and programmes of work and additional references

a) Relevant decisions and programmes of work

Description	Name of document	Link
COP 13 Cancun Declaration	Cancun Declaration on Mainstreaming the Conservation and Sustainable use of Biodiversity for Well-Being	https://www.cbd.int/cop/cop-13/hls/in-session/cancun-declaration-draft-dec-03-2016-pm-en.pdf
CBD (by article)	Convention on Biological Diversity (1992)	https://www.cbd.int/convention/text/default.shtml
Decision VII/5	Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Programme of Work	https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-07/cop-07-dec-05-en.pdf
Decision VIII/28	Impact assessment: Voluntary guidelines on biodiversity-inclusive impact assessment	https://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/default.shtml?id=11042
Decision VIII/1	Island Biodiversity Programme of Work	https://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/default.shtml?id=11013
Decision X/2	Decision X/2 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020	https://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/?id=12268
Decision X/6	Integration of biodiversity into poverty eradication and development	https://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/default.shtml?id=12272
Decision X/21	Business Engagement	https://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/default.shtml?id=12287
Decision X/44	Incentive Measures	https://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/default.shtml?id=12310





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Decision XI/7	Business and biodiversity	https://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/default.shtml?id=13168
Decision XI/30	Incentive Measures	https://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/default.shtml?id=13191
Decision XII/3	Resource Mobilization	https://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/default.shtml?id=13366
Decision XII/7	Mainstreaming Gender Considerations	https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-12/cop-12-dec-07-en.pdf
Decision XII/10	Business engagement	https://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/default.shtml?id=13373
Decision XII/12, B, Annex	Plan of Action on Customary Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity	https://www.cbd.int/doc/publications/cbd-csu-en.pdf
Decision XIII/3	Strategic actions to enhance the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, including with respect to mainstreaming and the integration of biodiversity within and across sectors	https://www.cbd.int/decisions/cop/?m=cop-13
Decision XII/12 B. Annex	Article 8(j) and related provisions Plan of Action on Customary Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity	https://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/default.shtml?id=13375 https://www.cbd.int/doc/publications/cbd-csu-en.pdf
Decision XIII/20	Resource mobilization	https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-13/cop-13-dec-20-en.doc





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Decision 14/3	Mainstreaming of biodiversity in the energy and mining, infrastructure, manufacturing and processing sectors	https://www.cbd.int/decisions/cop/?m=cop-14
Decision 14/4	Health and biodiversity	
Decision 14/15	Safeguards in biodiversity financing mechanisms	
Agricultural Biodiversity Programme of work	Programme Element #4: Mainstreaming	https://www.cbd.int/agro/mainstreaming.shtml
Forest Biodiversity Programme of work	Programme Element #2: Institutional and socio-economic enabling environment	https://www.cbd.int/forest/PE2.shtml
Inland Waters Biodiversity Programme of work	Programme Element #2 : Institutional and socio-economic enabling environment	https://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/default.shtml?id=7741

b) Additional references

Element	Link
2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs)	https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E
Biodiversity-related Conventions	https://www.cbd.int/brc
Rio Conventions	https://www.cbd.int/rio
CBD Gender Plan of Action	https://www.cbd.int/gender/doc/CBD-GenderPlanofAction-EN-WEB.pdf





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Regional Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (RBSAPs)	https://www.cbd.int/nbsap/related-info/region-bsap/default.shtml
Biodiversity in EIA and SEA	https://www.cbd.int/doc/publications/imp-bio-eia-and-sea.pdf
Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (Advance Unedited Version) (6 May, 2019)	https://www.ipbes.net/system/tdf/spm_global_unedited_advance.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=35245

