CABES/RESPIN West Africa sub-Regional Workshop

"Towards Integrated Policies: Leveraging IPBES & IPCC Outcomes to Align Biodiversity and Climate Actions"

3th – 5 th December 2025

Lomé, Togo

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

The CABES/RESPIN West Africa sub-Regional Workshop held in Lomé from 3–5 December 2025 brought together biodiversity and climate experts from across West Africa, including participants associated with IPBES, CBD and IPCC processes, researchers, practitioners, ILK holders, youth representatives, women's organisations and development partners. Over three days, participants engaged in dialogues, peer learning sessions, structured group work and country exchanges aimed at improving understanding of the interwoven nature of biodiversity loss and climate change and exploring ways to strengthen alignment between biodiversity and climate communities.

The workshop created a reflective environment where challenges, success stories and lessons emerging from practice were openly shared. These discussions highlighted how the interplay between knowledge systems, institutions and communication practices shapes the region's capacity to respond to climate and biodiversity crises in an integrated way.

1. Recognizing the Interdependence of Biodiversity and Climate Change

Participants noted that a major challenge lies in persistent knowledge gaps and uneven awareness of biodiversity–climate linkages across institutions and networks. Many commented on the limited availability of data on how biodiversity loss aggravates climate impacts, the insufficient integration

of ILK into assessments and the difficulty of bridging different knowledge systems, which often leads to fragmented understanding among IPBES and IPCC communities. This affects how evidence is perceived, used and communicated in national processes.

Despite these constraints, participants shared encouraging experiences where biodiversity is treated with the same urgency as climate change. Examples included restoration and land management initiatives that enhance carbon storage while supporting ecological integrity and community livelihoods, as well as collaborative research efforts combining ecological and climate datasets to understand landscape-level risks. Such initiatives demonstrate the value of cross-disciplinary cooperation and highlight the potential for integrated solutions already emerging in the region.

The discussions reinforced that joint learning spaces are crucial for building shared understanding. Participants emphasized the importance of dialogue in unpacking complex feedbacks between ecosystems and climate, as well as the value of exchanging interpretations of IPBES and IPCC findings. Many highlighted the need to cultivate a culture of working together, aligning conceptual frameworks and communicating interactions in ways that resonate with policy-makers and practitioners.

2. Encouraging Interaction Among IPBES, CBD and IPCC Communities

Participants described several obstacles that hinder deeper collaboration between biodiversity and climate communities. These included limitations in cross-community consultation, an absence of structured opportunities for sustained dialogue and challenges arising from different institutional mandates, timelines and terminology used in the two global processes. Some noted that messages from the IPCC tend to be more visible to policy-makers, creating imbalance in how evidence from biodiversity and climate fields is accessed and understood.

Despite these challenges, participants pointed to promising experiences where interaction between communities has already begun to grow. In some countries, informal exchanges between biodiversity and climate teams allow stakeholders to jointly interpret global assessment findings, while cross-country networks established through CABES and RESPIN have helped create new professional relationships and foster mutual support. These exchanges show that collaboration does

not necessarily depend on formal structures; it often begins with simple opportunities to meet, discuss and learn together.

Lessons emerging from these conversations highlighted the usefulness of better mutual understanding of IPBES and IPCC working methods, review procedures and evidence standards. Participants underscored that shared synthesis products, collaborative communication efforts and regular joint workshops can help foster coherence in messaging without prescribing governance arrangements. They also recognized the importance of acknowledging and appreciating the distinct yet complementary roles of the two processes.

3. Promoting Coherence Across National Biodiversity and Climate Planning

Participants discussed how national strategies such as NBSAPs, NDCs and NAPs often evolve in parallel, resulting in standalone policy documents that do not fully reflect the interconnected nature of biodiversity and climate challenges. Challenges raised included limited political momentum for cross-sectoral exchanges, differences in how ILK and scientific evidence are incorporated into planning processes and difficulties in translating global assessment outputs into national priorities. These issues often lead to fragmented policies and missed opportunities for synergy.

Yet participants brought forward examples of increasingly coordinated approaches in several countries. These included instances of technical teams reviewing both biodiversity and climate planning documents together, cases where ecosystem restoration targets were developed alongside climate resilience objectives and joint events where ministries co-reflected on shared indicators and policy pathways. These experiences suggest that even modest forms of collaboration can lead to more coherent planning outcomes.

The workshop generated lessons emphasizing the importance of shared timelines, co-learning formats and user-friendly synthesis materials that help bridge thematic boundaries. Participants expressed interest in peer learning to explore how neighbouring countries integrate global scientific findings into national processes and emphasized the value of clearer guidance and trialogue formats involving scientists, policy-makers and communities. Such approaches can help ensure that integrated perspectives gradually become more common in national planning.

4. Reinforcing Science–Policy–Practice Interfaces

Participants acknowledged that sustained collaboration between biodiversity and climate communities depends partly on well-functioning science–policy–practice interfaces. They noted challenges related to limited information-sharing channels, differing mandates across institutions and the absence of consistent frameworks for exchange. These issues often result in insufficient visibility of biodiversity insights within climate discussions and vice versa, weakening the overall coherence of evidence used in decision-making.

Nevertheless, participants highlighted success stories involving national and regional platforms supported by CABES and RESPIN, which have facilitated dialogue among diverse actors and provided spaces for co-producing knowledge across disciplines. Experiences shared from various countries demonstrated how regular interaction among researchers, practitioners and policy actors can enable more balanced discussions about risks, priorities and opportunities at the biodiversity–climate nexus.

Lessons learned pointed to the importance of developing flexible, participant-driven interfaces that support repeated engagement rather than formalised institutions. Participants emphasised the value of thematic dialogues, collaborative interpretation workshops and joint learning laboratories, along with user research to understand the information needs of decision-makers. Investing in relationships, communication and shared learning was widely seen as an essential foundation for effective interfaces.

5. Building Capacities and Strengthening Diverse Knowledge Systems

The workshop reaffirmed that capacity development remains central to strengthening Africa's contribution to global science–policy processes. Participants described challenges related to inconsistent understanding of IPBES and IPCC procedures, limited familiarity with the timelines and expectations of the two processes and insufficient national visibility of biodiversity-focused outputs. These gaps are compounded by broader awareness challenges, particularly regarding the role and relevance of IPBES at national level.

At the same time, participants pointed to strong regional assets, including the SPIBES MSc programme, CABES short courses and multistakeholder training initiatives that enhance

understanding of the science–policy interface. Success stories also included the integration of ILK into local adaptation and ecosystem management efforts, reflecting growing appreciation of multiple knowledge systems and new opportunities for collaboration.

Lessons emerging from the capacity discussions underscored the value of joint training sessions that bring biodiversity and climate communities together, clear and accessible guidance to support users of assessments and the use of trialogue approaches to strengthen inclusive knowledge co-production. Participants stressed that the ability to communicate and apply integrated scientific messages is as important as producing them.

6. Moving Forward Through Dialogue, Exchange and Joint Learning

The workshop concluded with participants reflecting on future intentions. These were not commitments, but aspirations to continue strengthening collaboration through ongoing exchange and relationship-building. Participants expressed interest in staying connected through cross-country dialogues, sharing insights from the workshop with colleagues, organizing informal knowledge-sharing sessions and participating in joint events around future IPBES, CBD and IPCC milestones. They also expressed readiness to explore collaborative research, co-developed synthesis materials and continued opportunities for peer learning.

Acknowledgements

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Lomé, 5 December 2025

The Participants