CABES
Capacity Development for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Experts in Africa

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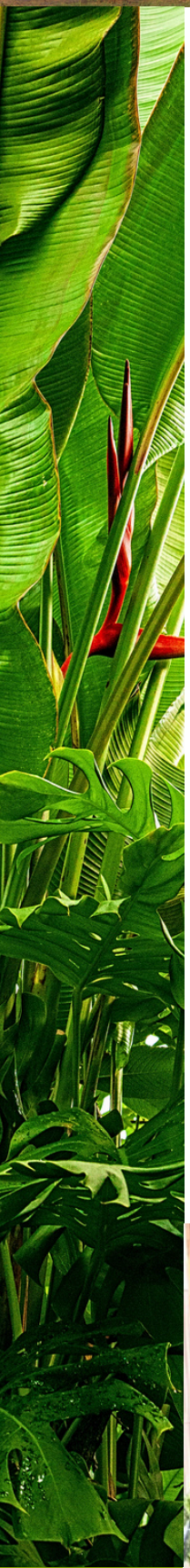

Towards Integrated Policies: leveraging IPBES & IPCC outcomes to align national biodiversity and climate actions

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy brief is a brief summary of the outcomes of the West Africa sub-regional workshop with theme: "*Towards Integrated Policies: Using IPBES and IPCC Publications to Harmonise Action for Biodiversity and Climate*", co-organized by CABES (Capacity Building for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) and RESPIN (Strengthening the Science-Policy Interface for Biodiversity Knowledge and Policy) projects. The workshop brought together 110 participants from 30 countries, including UN CBD, IPBES and IPCC National Focal Points, academia, practitioners, indigenous knowledge holders and CABES SPIBES students from West Africa and beyond, and was held between 3 - 5 December, 2025 in Lomé, Togo.

The workshop aimed to strengthen the dialogue between science and policy by improving understanding of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Interfaces on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) processes, identifying potential synergies, and helping African countries harmonize their biodiversity and climate policies. It seeks to identify existing gaps, explore institutional and technical barriers, and develop collaborative strategies for integrated biodiversity and climate management.

stakeholders identified significant knowledge gaps, institutional barriers, and missed opportunities in the collaboration between IPBES and IPCC. While both platforms provide essential evidence for decision-making, their visibility, accessibility, and integration into national processes remain uneven. IPBES is perceived as less known, less accessible, and less funded, while IPCC benefits from stronger communication and political traction.

Key messages

- Governance fragmentation and funding imbalances continue to hinder biodiversity-climate integration.
- IPBES and IPCC offer complementary strengths that, if leveraged jointly, can enhance both processes.
- Harmonised indicators and shared datasets are needed to support coherent biodiversity-climate governance.
- Improved communication strategies and capacity development are essential for an effective climate-biodiversity science-policy interface.
- IPBES outputs require greater visibility and uptake in national policy processes compared to IPCC.

Identified knowledge gaps on IPBES and IPCC

participants identified opportunities to strengthen the uptake of IPBES and IPCC outputs in national decision-making. A notable observation was the difference in visibility between the two platforms. While the IPCC enjoys broad recognition among policymakers, media, and technical institutions, IPBES would benefit from greater outreach and dissemination efforts. Some participants noted limited prior exposure to IPBES, reflecting the potential to expand awareness of its assessments at the national level.

This difference in profile is partly attributable to communication approaches. IPCC reports are supported by accessible visual tools, clear messaging, and sustained political engagement. IPBES products, while substantively rich, present an opportunity for more accessible formats and targeted dissemination, particularly in contexts where digital connectivity is constrained. Participants also noted the value of translations and simplified materials in broadening the reach of IPBES findings among non-specialist audiences.

A further area for development concerns the distinct scientific cultures underpinning each platform. IPCC assessments draw primarily on modelling and physical sciences, while IPBES integrates ecological, social, and indigenous and local knowledge systems. Greater familiarity with these complementary approaches would support national actors in interpreting and applying the findings of each platform. Participants also expressed interest in clearer guidance on how global assessments can inform national policy instruments, including NDCs, NBSAPs, national adaptation plans, and sectoral strategies. Addressing these areas represents a meaningful opportunity to strengthen the capacity of national institutions to draw on global evidence in support of integrated climate–biodiversity planning.

Barriers to national Climate - Biodiversity collaboration

Participants identified several structural barriers to collaboration between climate and biodiversity communities. Chief among these is institutional fragmentation: in many countries, the two agendas are managed by separate ministries with distinct mandates, funding streams, and reporting obligations, generating parallel processes with limited interaction despite their inherent interconnections.

This separation is compounded by the absence of formal coordination mechanisms. Few countries have established platforms bringing together IPBES and IPCC focal points, or CBD and UNFCCC teams, meaning information exchange tends to be *ad hoc* and relationship-dependent rather than institutionally anchored. Funding disparities further constrain collaboration. Climate initiatives attract considerably greater international financing than biodiversity, limiting the capacity of biodiversity institutions to participate in joint activities or meaningfully contribute to national planning. This imbalance reinforces the perception that climate is the more politically urgent agenda, leaving biodiversity comparatively under-resourced.

Finally, the misalignment of governance cycles: IPCC reporting processes do not coincide with IPBES assessment schedules; reduces opportunities for coordinated engagement. Together, these factors present a structural challenge to integrated climate–biodiversity action that warrants dedicated attention from national and international stakeholders.

Opportunities for complementarity and mutual learning

Notwithstanding these challenges, participants underscored the significant complementarities between the two platforms and the potential for enhanced collaboration to strengthen the relevance and uptake of global assessments. IPBES brings particular value through its integration of indigenous and local knowledge and its social-ecological framing, approaches that could meaningfully enrich climate policy processes, particularly in its scenario modelling and the design of adaptation strategies. Conversely, IPCC's communication practices, notably the clarity of its visuals, summaries, and messaging, were consistently cited as a model from which IPBES could draw. Its institutional standing and structured capacity-building mechanisms represent further areas of relevant experience.

Participants converged on the view that both platforms would benefit from joint methodologies, shared expert pools, and harmonised assessment cycles. Co-developed communication products tailored to regional policy contexts and joint capacity-building programmes for national focal points were identified as promising entry points for deeper collaboration.

Opportunities for Climate - Biodiversity alignment

Participants identified a range of opportunities to strengthen climate–biodiversity synergies at national and regional levels. Ongoing revisions of key policy instruments, including NDCs, NBSAPs, national adaptation plans, and national development strategies, offer timely entry points for embedding climate–biodiversity linkages and ensuring global assessments inform national priorities.

Nature-based solutions represent a particularly strong area of convergence. Ecosystem restoration, sustainable land management, and agroecology

Figure: *Word cloud for the word 'collaboration' in the different language of the workshop participants*

deliver co-benefits across climate mitigation, adaptation, and biodiversity conservation. Existing African initiatives, such as the Great Green Wall, demonstrate the scalability of such approaches. Institutionally, national Rio Convention committees, inter-ministerial working groups, and regional networks such as CABES and RESPIN offer coordination platforms for aligning the two agendas. Funding mechanisms, including GEF, GCF, GBFF, and the International Climate Initiative (IKI) present further opportunities for integrated project development.

Finally, universities and research institutions have an important role in supporting integration through interdisciplinary curricula, joint research, and the training of future experts. Improved data sharing and shared spatial tools, such as overlaying carbon stock maps with biodiversity hotspot data, can further strengthen evidence-based planning.

From workshop to action: follow-up actions

Capacity building, improved communication strategies, stronger research engagement, and enhanced data sharing between climate and biodiversity institutions were identified as cross-cutting needs.

However, participants left the workshop with concrete commitments to advance climate–biodiversity integration in their respective countries. Common priorities include establishing or revitalising national coordination platforms to bring together IPBES and IPCC focal points, CBD and UNFCCC teams, and relevant technical agencies; integrating climate–biodiversity linkages into ongoing NDC and NBSAP revision processes; and developing joint project proposals to access funding.

Other highlighted country-specific practical collaboration entry points, include: convene national meetings to mainstream environmental issues across sectors; overlay carbon stock and biodiversity hotspot data to support integrated spatial planning; involve IPCC focal points in national biodiversity processes; formalise IPBES membership and strengthen coordination and implement joint climate–biodiversity policies through 2030. In sum, African stakeholders demonstrated clear commitment to bridging climate and biodiversity agendas through stronger coordination, joint funding, and capacity development.

RELEVANT SOURCES

- IPBES assessment reports: *https://www.ipbes.net/assessing-knowledge*
- IPCC synthesis reports: *https://www.ipcc.ch/synthesis-report/*

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