



OPERATIONAL GUIDE OF THE ETHIOPIAN BIODIVERSITY PLATFORM



**ETHIOPIAN BIODIVERSITY
INSTITUTE**

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1. Introduction

1.1. Rationale for establishing the Ethiopian Biodiversity Platform

Ethiopia is located in the Horn of Africa extending between 30–150N latitudes and 330– 480E longitudes. The country has a total area of 1.13 million km². The topographic features of Ethiopia are complex - rugged, rolling, flat-topped plateaus, deep gorges and valleys, within wide altitudinal variation ranging from 125m below sea level at Afar Depression to a peak altitude of 4533m above sea level at Mount Ras Dashen. The diverse topography gives rise to a wide range of altitude and other environmental factors, wide variations in rainfall, humidity and temperature. As a result, Ethiopia has different ecosystems that range from Afroalpine region at the highest elevation to desert and semidesert settings at the lower elevations. Because of these, the country is endowed with diverse animal, plant and microbial species. This makes Ethiopia one of the top 25 biodiversity-rich countries in the world, and it contains part of the two of the world's 36 biodiversity hotspots, namely: the Eastern Afromontane and the Horn of Africa hotspots. Furthermore, the country is known for its cultural diversity for there exist more than 80 language groups practicing diverse farming systems and acquiring well developed local knowledge. Although Ethiopia is endowed with such highly invaluable biological resources and associated community knowledge systems, these assets have been confronted with multitudes of natural and anthropogenic challenges which resulted in depletion of biological diversity as well as the ecosystems

services they render. As it is well recognized, such dwindling of the vital resources and associated benefits was a prerequisite for considering taking appropriate interventions such as conducting a National Ecosystem Assessment and also establishing a National Biodiversity Platform. This arrangement will help to enhance the engagement of scientists, policy makers, civil society, private sector and local communities in science-policy processes. Furthermore, it facilitates communication of policy to science and vice versa, so as to promote the undertaking of policy relevant research and at the same time enable the use of scientific evidence in policy making. Likewise, the Platform helps to inform the business sector about the role of biodiversity and enables the use of science for assessing biodiversity benefits, risks and dependence. The Platform has the following major objectives and principles.

1.2. Objectives

The Ethiopian Biodiversity Platform (EBP) is established to:

- Raise awareness, build the capacity of science and policy communities and strengthen communication networks for information and knowledge sharing around biodiversity and ecosystem services,
- Enable engagement of experts and other knowledge holders in undertaking biodiversity policy relevant research,
- Enable engagement of scientists, practitioners and local communities in decisionmaking processes,
- Enhance the recognition and use of indigenous and local knowledge in decisionmaking and intervention programs,
- Encourage the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation issues into sectoral plans,

- Disseminate and use the findings from Ethiopia's national ecosystem assessment and other similar ventures,
- Support and connect the national implementation processes with the international context and conventions such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, Convention to Combat Desertification, and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

1.3. Principles

The EBP will be operating guided by the following principles.

1. **Legitimacy:** inclusiveness, transparency in designing policy decision processes, recognizing and valuing wide arrays of viewpoints or ideas;
2. **Relevance:** the compatibility of the science-policy interferences with the dynamicity of conservation and societal needs and the usability of knowledge generated;
3. **Credibility:** evidence quality and validity of the knowledge exchange processes at the policy-science interface;
4. **Adaptability:** adaptive management processes based on the evaluation of the success and failure, and ensuring of the constructive governance system; and
5. **Equity:** ensuring prior and informed consent of local communities in conservation and sustainable utilization biological resources, and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources and associated community knowledge.

2. Coordination

The Ethiopian Biodiversity Institute is the primary governmental entity mandated to ensure the conservation and sustainable utilization of biodiversity and access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their use. It is the Focal Institute to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It has been coordinating the planning and implementations of several biodiversity and ecosystems related undertakings such as the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans and the National Ecosystem Assessment Project. Therefore, the Institute will take the overall responsibility of coordinating the establishment of the National Biodiversity Platform- Ethiopia (EBP), its sub-committees and task forces. It will also organize the meetings of the Platform as well as its committees.

3. Structure of the Ethiopian Biodiversity Platform

The EBP is designed with the objective of connecting the three spheres of actors (policy makers, the scientific community and operators) for better integration of their actions with respect to the conservation of biological diversity and ecosystem services. The Platform, therefore, will encompass members representing these three areas of operation (government agencies, research institutions, private sector, local communities, civil society organizations and, development partners). The General Assembly (the Plenary) is the highest body of the Platform while an executive committee and different subcommittee including core research team (knowledge brokering), capacity-building, finance mobilization, local knowledge promotion.

4. Ethiopian Biodiversity Platform roles and responsibilities

4.1. The Plenary

The Plenary (Generals Assembly) shall consist of member of the Platform who represent decision/policy makers, the scientific community, operators and other stakeholders; shall meet once per year unless it becomes important to hold an extraordinary general meeting; passes decisions on platform-related issues, validates and endorses assessments and reports that pertain to biodiversity and ecosystem services. Moreover, the Plenary designs scheme for facilitated communication of information between scientists and policy makers, and promotes collaborative engagements among all actors. The Plenary shall be chaired by the head of the ministry to which the Ethiopian Biodiversity Institute (EBI) is accountable to (i.e. the Minister of Ministry of Agriculture as per the current institutional setup) while the chair of the relevant standing committee of the parliament shall serve as deputy chair of the Platform, and EBI's Director General as secretary.

4.2. The Executive Committee

The Executive Committee will consist of Nine (9) members elected by the Plenary except for the Director General of EBI and the IPBES focal point who shall serve as a chair and secretary of the committee, respectively, and shall remain permanent members; shall meet quarterly; shall take care of all administrative issues of the Platform.

4.3. Sub-committees

The Subcommittees will principally include the multidisciplinary team of experts, capacity building & resource mobilization team, and local knowledge promotion & integration team; responsible for coordinating and overseeing issues, among others, the assessment of the state of the country's biodiversity and ecosystem services, the reciprocal exchange of information between policy makers and scientists, the enhancement of capacity to undertake research and making practical interventions, the integration of knowledge systems towards the conservation of biodiversity and its sustainable utilization, and the provision of advice to the executive committee and the Platform.

4.4. Task forces

Task Forces will be established under the different subcommittees as appropriate; shall execute tasks assigned by the corresponding subcommittees.

4.5. PBES Focal Point

The IPBES Focal Point shall serve as secretary to the executive committee of the platform; shall be responsible for coordinating meetings of the executive committee and the platform, and also for the necessary reporting.

5. Ethiopian Biodiversity Platform members

The Ethiopian Biodiversity Platform shall consist of members representing all key stakeholders (policy makers, academia, researchers, private sector, civil society and local communities). Member institutions shall be represented in the plenary through their official delegates; while for individual volunteers and environmental activists shall be nominated by the Ethiopian Biodiversity Institute. The EBP members and their responsibilities are presented in the Table below.

No.	Categories	Stakeholders	Roles
1	Policy/decision makers	Parliament	
		PM Office	
		Sectoral Ministries	
2	Academic and research institutions	Universities	
		Training centers	
		General education sector	
		Research institutions	
		Conservation sectors	
3	Private sectors	Industries	
		Other business enterprises	
4	Communities	Local and urban communities	
		Youth and women groups	
5	Civil societies	Professional societies	
		Religious institutions	
		Environmental advocacy groups	
		Volunteers	
6	Development partners	International organizations	
		NGOs	
7	Media	Public media	
		Private media	

6. Working modalities

The Platform's operational guide is the primary tool that provides a general framework for carrying activities as stipulated in the document. For accomplishing its missions and attain the specified objectives, the Platform shall adhere to its operational principles (credibility, relevance, legitimacy, adaptability and equity). Accordingly, all the platforms actions will build on a participation philosophy that emphasizes empowerment, equity, trust, and learning as well as having a deliberative approach.

The involvement of stakeholders shall be strengthened starting from determining the scoping of the Platform's action plan; and shall be based on a collaborative approach and a reasonable technical, financial and in-kind contributions in a manner that paves the way for the progressive strengthening of the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services across scales, sectors and knowledge systems.

7. Resource mobilization

The resources mobilization task force will take on the responsibility of seeking resources to undertake the activities planned by the EBP. Furthermore, the EBP will solicit funds for operation during the transitional period right after the phasing-out of the National Ecosystem Project.

8. Communication and evaluation

The EBP will facilitate the information exchange and dissemination strategies on knowledge generated, skills and experience using different communication means such as conferences, face to face, social media, mass media and websites. To this end, EBP will use different communication materials such as Summary for Policy Makers, brochures and press releases.

The communication strategy developed in connection with the National Ecosystem Project shall be used as a major reference for the communication undertakings. To assess the effectiveness of the communication activities as outlined in the strategy, the evaluation plan will be developed by EBP.

9. Sustainability of the Platform

In order to meet its objectives in smooth and uninterrupted manner, EBP will, among others, communicate planning and implementation of biodiversity and ecosystem related activities through its biannual and annual meetings of the involved ranging from its plenary to the national stakeholders. Collecting and collating data and information related to planning and implementation of biodiversity and ecosystem services that will be enshrined into planning and implementation of the Post 2020 Ethiopian Biodiversity Framework as well as overseeing the planning of the Framework will be its major task. To achieve the above, while human and physical resources will be allocated by the Ethiopian Biodiversity Institute, the other resources required are expected to be fulfilled in ways outlined in Section 6.