Improving the science-policy on biodiversity and ecosystem services: a major challenge for environmental science and policy

Dr. Carsten Neßhöver
Department of Conservation Biology,
Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research GmbH – UFZ, Leipzig

With the first plenary meeting of the new Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) taking place in Nairobi in parallel to the Science for the Environment Conference, we may step into a new era of the science-policy dialogue on pressing societal challenges like safeguarding biodiversity worldwide or ensuring long-term availability of ecosystem services. The long-lasting discussions about IPBES have shown that there is no easy solution to properly address the topic of biodiversity and ecosystem services in a science-policy platform for several reasons:

- the knowledge available is still scattered across many organisations, institutions and individual experts and a broad integration of knowledge across different disciplines is needed
- nevertheless, the baseline knowledge about the reasons for biodiversity loss and diminishing ecosystem services is well known, thus one focus must be on identifying options to tackle these reasons, not just on assessing status and trends
- loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services is a global challenge, but problems and their solutions will often need a focus on the local or the regional level, thus integration of knowledge from these levels is needed as well
- based on the recent experiences from the climate change debate and the IPCC, communication of results, uncertainties and the processes leading to these results will be of major importance

So, when designing the operational mode of IPBES and its work programme, these issues would need to be addressed. In addition, these challenges call for complementing a global body by further efforts to design similar interfaces on the regional and national level, to act together with IPBES as a “network of networks”, a concept recently developed by, inter alia, the European Platform for Biodiversity Research Strategy (EPBRS), to tackle some of these challenges.

The talk will discuss these challenges and present an initial prototype for such an approach, developed within the European project KNEU to develop a network of knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystem services – *BiodiversityKnowledge*, in Europe (www.biodiversityknowledge.eu). In order to properly tackle the goals and actions identified in the new EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2020, such approaches need rapid development to improve significantly the environmental decision making based on the best available knowledge.