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15 May 2023

**CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE
INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL
CHANGE RESEARCH
Thirty First meeting
Panama City, Panama
21-22 June 2023
Agenda item 13(d)(i)**

Agenda item 13(d)(i): The IAI regional assessment

1. This document has been prepared by the IAI Directorate.

Background

2. This document summarizes preliminary findings of the Regional Assessment of IAI Parties priorities relating to global change policy decisions.
3. The Conference of the Parties, at its 27th meeting (Brasilia, Brazil, 2019), adopted Decision XXVII/12 on the IAI strategic plan.
4. The Strategic Plan includes the following recommended actions:
 - i. *That the Parties work with the SAC, SPAC and the Directorate to map their domestic and international global change policy and decision-making landscape. This will support the IAI in funding research that is policy-relevant for member countries.*
 - ii. *The Directorate will identify knowledge gaps, find commonalities, and direct research and resources towards informing Parties' priority needs.*
5. Accordingly, the Conference of the Parties, at its 29th meeting (Videoconference, 2021), adopted Decision XXIX/16, which instructed:

... the IAI Directorate, in collaboration with the Parties, the SAC and the SPAC, to map the domestic and international global change policy and decision-making landscape through a regional assessment, subject to the availability of external resources.
6. A more detailed description of the theoretical background and methodological approach of the Regional Assessment was presented at CoP-30 (Montevideo and

videoconference)¹. A preliminary report² of activities and outcomes from March 2022 to October 2022 was presented at the 54th meeting of the Executive Council (Videoconference, 2022).

Activities and methodology

7. The Regional Assessment is being implemented through the integration of information from surveys, listening sessions, and policy documents in an iterative and flexible fashion, as described in the following (see Figure 1):
 - i. In April 2022 the IAI Directorate distributed an online survey to focal points of 17 IAI Parties resulting in an 100% response rate. This survey aimed to:
 - a. compare current and emergent policy priorities related to Global Environmental Change (GEC) among countries; and,
 - b. compare perceived barriers and opportunities for the use of scientific information in decision-making among countries (Figure 1).
 - ii. In July 2022, the IAI Directorate conducted four sub-regional listening sessions to better understand the GEC policy priorities of countries of each sub-region (Southern Cone, Andes, Central America and the Caribbean and North America). Focal points, government officials, Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and Science-Policy Advisory Committee (SPAC) members from 11 IAI Parties participated in the sub-regional listening sessions;
 - iii. In December 2022, the same online survey was distributed to senior GEC researchers from the Americas to understand their perspectives and assess the level of alignment between their responses and those of decision-makers. 56 researchers from 15 countries in the Americas responded; and,
 - iv. In March and April 2023, the IAI Directorate systematically identified and analyzed 86 GEC policy documents (e.g. national laws, adaptation and mitigation plans, etc.) from 17 IAI Parties.

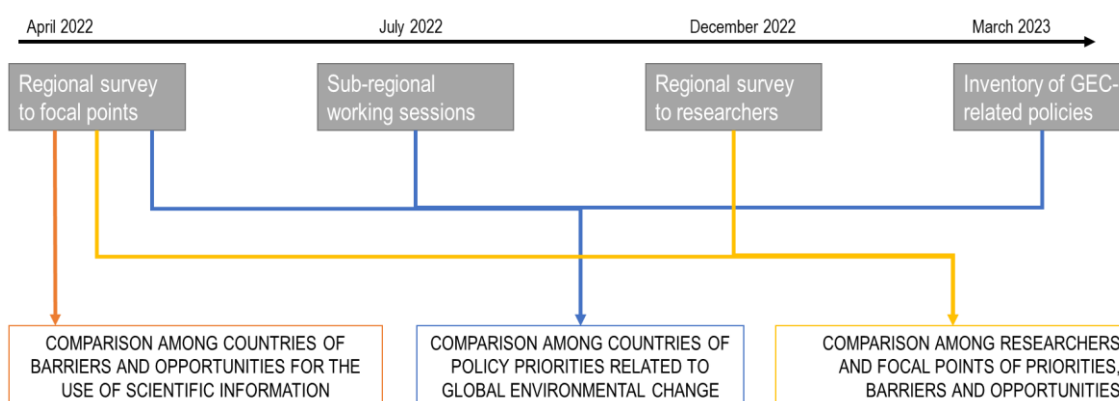


Figure 1. Workflow and timeline of activities of the Regional Assessment (grey boxes) and their contribution to its objectives (white boxes), whose results are summarized in this report. GEC: Global Environmental Change

¹ See document IAI/COP/30/11/d/Annex (<https://www.iai.int/administrador/assets/images/ckfinder/files/IAI-CoP-30-11d1Annex-en.pdf>)

² See document IAI/EC/54/4/a/i (<https://www.iai.int/administrador/assets/images/ckfinder/files/IAI-EC-54-4-a-i-en.pdf>)

Results

Current GEC policy priorities

8. The Directorate assessed the importance of the eight goals established in Theme II - *Science for the Sustainability of the Americas* of the Strategic Plan by comparing information from the regional survey to Parties and researchers, the sub-regional listening sessions, and the policy documents.
9. The highest priority was Climate Action, followed by Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (Figure 2, part a). Each of these top two priorities was more than twice as important as the third one (Water Security).
10. The high priority assigned to Climate Action is consistent across the three sources of information (high agreement, high priority). Biodiversity and ecosystem services was identified as a high priority by many countries; however, there was less agreement about the importance of this goal (medium agreement, high priority).
11. Certain shared priorities emerged at the sub-regional level. Water security was a high priority for countries with the largest share of Arid Andes (Chile, Bolivia and Peru). Clean air, water, and soils was a priority for North America (US and Canada).
12. Researchers who were surveyed identified Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and Water Security as the most important goals today (Figure 2, part b). The researchers from countries in the Arid Andes (Argentina, Chile, and Bolivia) agreed about the prioritization of Water Security. Researchers from highly biodiverse countries (Bolivia, Ecuador, and Colombia) agreed about the prioritization of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

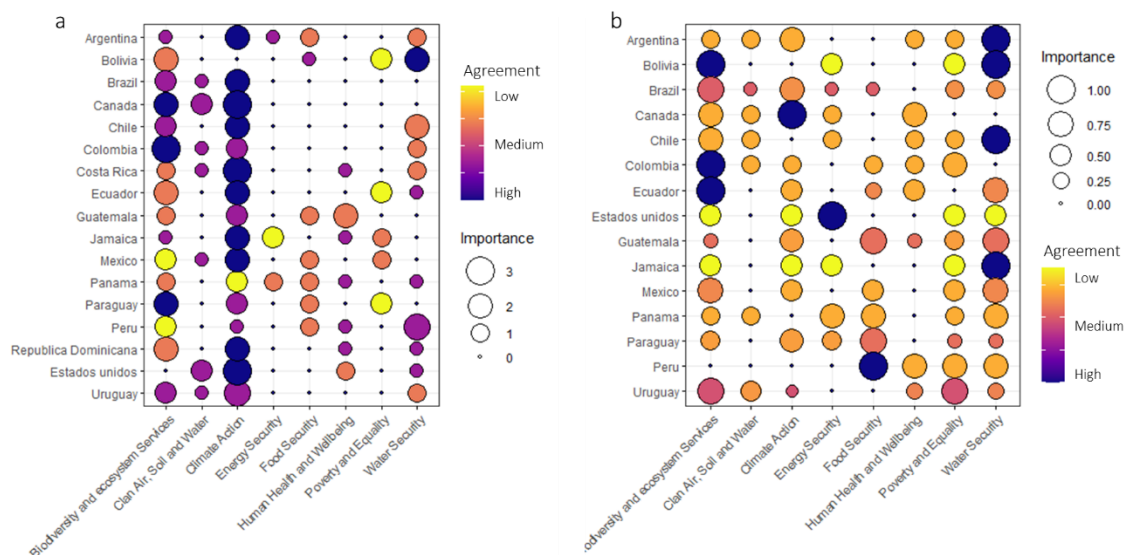


Figure 2. Current policy priorities related to GEC for 17 IAI Parties. We assessed the importance assigned by focal points (a) and researchers (b) to the goals established in Theme II – Science for the Sustainability of the Americas of the IAI’s Strategic Plan. We compared information from regional surveys, sub-regional listening sessions, and policy documents. The balloon size indicates the importance assigned by each country to each of the IAI strategic goals. This was obtained by averaging the information from the three sources. The balloon color indicates the level of agreement (standard deviation) among the sources of information.

Emerging GEC policy priorities

13. Human Health and Wellbeing were identified as the most critical emerging priority by focal points, followed by Energy Security (Figure 3). Poverty and inequality were identified as the most important emerging priorities by researchers. The other strategic goals, except

climate action, were also identified by researchers as similarly important emerging topics.

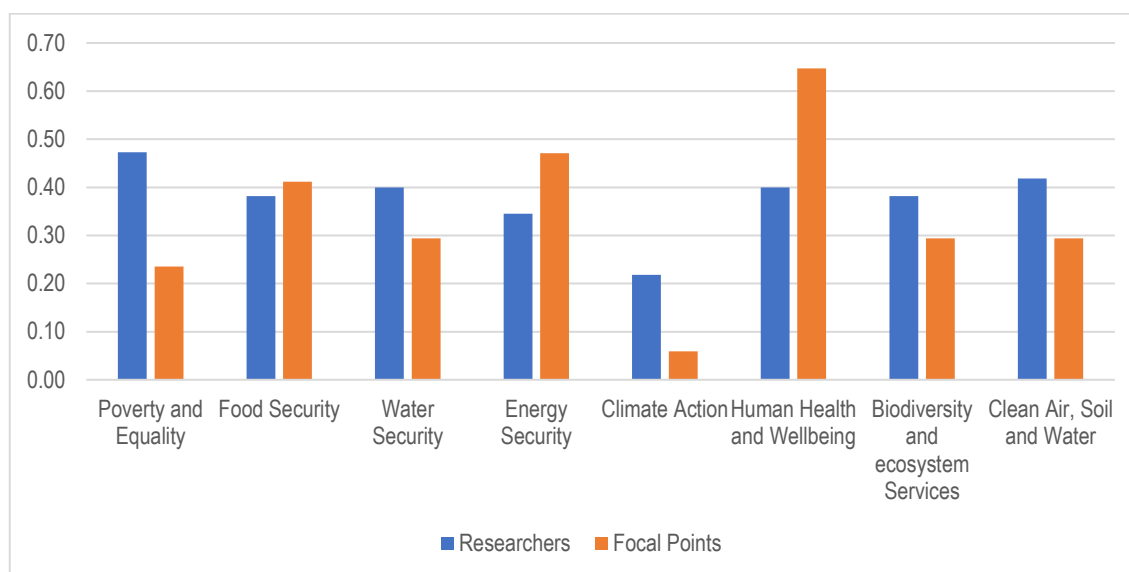


Figure 3. Comparison of emergent priorities identified by researchers and focal points in regional surveys. The bars indicate how frequently each IAI strategic objective was identified by focal points (orange bars) or researchers (blue bars).

Barriers and opportunities for the use of scientific information in decision-making

14. Focal points and researchers agreed that the main barriers to using scientific information in decision-making are the lack of inter-sectoral collaboration, the lack of scientific information available for non-technical audiences, and the presence of other governmental priorities (Figure 4, part a). Researchers also identified the lack of political mandates and lack of local or regional evidence to inform decision-making. Additionally, focal points highlighted the limited capacity to analyze and interpret data and the lack of official databases as barriers.
15. Focal points identified the following opportunities to use scientific information to inform decision-making: international funding and cooperation, the presence of multi-lateral agreements, and spaces for transboundary dialogues. Researchers identified the growing body of national and international evidence as a key opportunity (Figure 4, part b).



Figure 4. Comparison of the barriers (a) and opportunities (b) for the use of scientific information in decision-making identified by focal points and researchers in regional surveys. The bars indicate how frequently each barrier and opportunity was identified by focal points (orange bars) or researchers (blue bars).

Key findings

16. The preliminary results of the Regional Assessment summarized above yielded the following key findings:

- i. There is high agreement that Climate Action is the most important policy priority for IAI Parties today;

- ii. Decision-makers and researchers agree that Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and Water Security are also top regional policy priorities;
- iii. Top emerging policy priorities highlight the social consequences of GEC (Human Health and Wellbeing and Poverty and Equality);
- iv. The lack of cross-sectoral collaboration is a major barrier to the use of scientific information in decision-making.

Recommendation

17. The Conference of the Parties is invited to take note of this report.