Who are we?
The International Resource Panel (IRP) is a global science-policy platform established by UN member states and the United Nations Environment Programme in 2007. Similar to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the IRP develops evidence-based data, analysis and policy-relevant options that support decision making. The IRP’s mandate is to provide research on the sustainable use of natural resources and their environmental impacts over the full life cycle.

Unlike any other science-policy panel, our focus is on the global use of natural resources, and how to make sure the way we use these resources is equitable and just, maximizes socio-economic outcomes and minimizes the impacts to the planet. The IRP is serviced by a United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) hosted Secretariat, based in Paris, France.

Who are the Panel’s scientific experts?
The Panel consists of 35 eminent scientists highly skilled in resource management who come from a wide range of academic institutions and multidisciplinary scientific backgrounds. This group of scientists is Co-chaired by Janez Potočnik, former European Commissioner for the Environment, and Izabella Teixeira, former Environment Minister of Brazil.

Which natural resources does the panel study?
Resources — including land, water, air and materials — are parts of the natural world that can be used in economic activities to produce goods and services. Material resources are biomass (like crops for food, energy and bio-based materials, as well as wood for energy and industrial uses), fossil fuels (in particular coal, gas and oil for energy), metals (such as iron, aluminium and copper used in construction and electronics manufacturing) and non-metallic minerals (used for construction, notably sand, gravel and limestone).

Who is the governing body of the IRP?
The Steering Committee is the governing body of the IRP. The Steering Committee is currently composed of 28 governments, the European Commission, and UNEP. It is co-chaired by Astrid Schomaker, Director for Global Sustainable Development in the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Environment, and Steven Stone, Deputy Director of UNEP’s Industry and Economy Division.

What level of representation is on the Steering Committee?
Government nominated focal points are generally at the Director or Deputy Director level within ministries of environment, planning, economy, sustainable development, energy, infrastructure or other.
What are the roles and responsibilities of the Steering Committee?

- Strategic guidance and approval of the IRP’s Work Programme including its strategic direction and research priorities.
- Approval of the IRP’s operational strategy, including endorsement of the annual budget and recommending resource mobilization opportunities.
- Input and recommendation throughout the IRP research development process.
- Advocacy and support of IRP research to increase policy uptake and impact at the international, regional and national levels.
- For OECD members, annual financial contributions.
- For non-OECD members, in accordance with their capacities, annual financial or in-kind contributions.
- For all members, voluntary in-kind contributions including translation, hosting the bi-annual meetings and other scientific meetings of the IRP, organizing national or regional outreach events or other.

What is the time commitment required of IRP Steering Committee members?

The IRP convenes biannual meetings to discuss, review and approve IRP research and operational matters, at least one of which is in-person. In addition, and upon request by the IRP members and Steering Committee, virtual or in-person meetings are convened to provide guidance to research works or operational aspects of the IRP. Steering Committee members are invited to participate. Steering Committee members are also invited to provide input and recommendations throughout the drafting of IRP research assessments.

Can my government join the Steering Committee?

Representatives from governments of Member States of the United Nations and Regional Economic Integration Organizations are invited to express interest in joining the IRP Steering Committee at any time. A letter of support from the appropriate authority confirming interest and availability to be part of the IRP Steering Committee is reviewed and approved by the Steering Committee membership.

What is the value added of joining the IRP Steering Committee?

By joining the IRP Steering Committee, members can set the IRP research agenda and input into the research which feeds into intergovernmental debates and outcomes, including at the United Nations Environment Assembly, the Group of 7 and the Group of 20 among others. You can learn more about IRP impact here.

How can I learn more about being part of the IRP Steering Committee?

Governments interested in joining the IRP can participate in the biannual meetings of the IRP as Observers to learn more about how the IRP works and the important role the Steering Committee plays. Interested parties are invited to contact the IRP Secretariat <unep-irpsecretariat@un.org> for more information.

What’s coming up next in IRP Research?

The IRP is implementing its 2022-2025 Programme of Work. Research Assessments are developed under four High-Impact Priority Areas (HIPAs): global resource use and sustainable resource management; sustainable resource management for effective action on climate change, biodiversity and pollution; sustainable resource management for effective action on human health, well-being, prosperity and equity; and enabling sustainability transitions. Please find more information here.