



Ref.: SCBD/CP/DC/MA/MW/87791

14 December 2018

NOTIFICATION

Submission of information on synthetic biology and nomination of experts to participate in the Open-ended Online Forum on Synthetic Biology

Dear Madam/Sir,

In decision 14/19, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity recognized that synthetic biology is rapidly developing and a cross-cutting issue, with potential benefits and potential adverse effects vis-à-vis the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and agreed that broad and regular horizon scanning, monitoring and assessing of the most recent technological developments is needed.

The Conference of the Parties decided to extend the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on Synthetic Biology with renewed membership, taking into account, inter alia, the work on risk assessment under the Cartagena Protocol, to work in accordance with the terms of reference annexed to the decision.

The Conference of the Parties also decided to extend the Open-ended Online Forum on Synthetic Biology, taking into account the work on risk assessment under the Cartagena Protocol, to support the deliberations of the AHTEG on Synthetic Biology, and invites Parties, other Governments, indigenous peoples and local communities and relevant organizations to continue to nominate experts to take part in the Online Forum on Synthetic Biology.

Further in the same decision, the Conference of the Parties invited Parties, other Governments, indigenous peoples and local communities, and relevant organizations to provide the Executive Secretary with relevant information to contribute to the work of the AHTEG, namely on:

(a) The relationship between synthetic biology and the criteria set out in decision IX/29, paragraph 12, in order to contribute to the completion of the assessment requested in decision XII/24, paragraph 2, building on the preliminary analysis prepared by the Executive Secretary in document SBSTTA/22/INF/17;

(b) New technological developments in synthetic biology since the last meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group in December 2017, including the consideration, among other things, of concrete applications of genome editing if they relate to synthetic biology, in order to support a broad and regular horizon scanning process;

(c) The current state of knowledge by analysing information, including but not limited to peer-reviewed published literature, on the potential positive and negative environmental impacts, taking into account human health, cultural and socioeconomic impacts, especially with regard to the value of biodiversity to indigenous peoples and local communities, of current and near-future applications of

To: CBD National Focal Points, relevant organizations, and indigenous peoples and local communities

cc: SBSTTA National Focal Points, Cartagena Protocol National Focal Points, Nagoya Protocol Focal Points

synthetic biology, including those applications that involve organisms containing engineered gene drives, taking into account the traits and species potentially subject to release and the dynamics of their dissemination; and

(d) Living organisms developed thus far through new developments in synthetic biology that may fall outside the definition of living modified organisms as per the Cartagena Protocol.

The various elements of the decision will be carried out in a systematic manner, through a continuous process comprising: (i) submission of information on synthetic biology; (ii) discussions through the open-ended online forum (tentatively to be held in March 2019); (iii) one face-to-face meeting of the AHTEG (tentatively to be held in June 2019); and (iv) peer-review of the outcomes of the AHTEG. The outcomes of this process will be submitted for consideration by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) at its twenty-fourth meeting to be held in 2020.

Accordingly, at this stage, I am pleased to invite Parties, other Governments, relevant organizations and indigenous people and local communities to:

(a) Submit to the Secretariat (secretariat@cbd.int) information and supporting documentation on the four topics referred to above as soon as possible, but no later than **15 February 2019**. Submissions from Parties should be made through the Focal Points of the Convention on Biological Diversity. In the case of organizations, information should be submitted through the head of such organization. The information submitted will be made available for consideration by the online forum and the AHTEG on Synthetic Biology; and

(b) To nominate experts to participate in the Open-ended Online Forum on Synthetic Biology. CBD National Focal Points or Heads of organizations, as appropriate, are kindly requested to submit nominations for experts via e-mail to secretariat@cbd.int clearly indicating the names and e-mails of each nominee. Nominees will be subsequently contacted by the Secretariat to facilitate their registration in the Open-ended Online Forum by completing an online form outlining their experience in the field of synthetic biology. The Online Forum is open to all interested participants but they must be registered in order to contribute to the online discussions. The outcomes of the online discussions will serve as a basis for the deliberations by the AHTEG on Synthetic Biology. Nominations of experts to the Open-ended Online Forum on Synthetic Biology must be received before **15 February 2019**.

Please accept, Madam/Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Cristiana Paşca Palmer, PhD
Executive Secretary