
**Multilateral Mechanism for the Fair and Equitable Sharing
of Benefits from the Use of Digital Sequence Information
on Genetic Resources, Including the Cali Fund**

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English only

Steering Committee

First meeting

Online, 16–18 June 2025

Minutes of the meeting

1. The first meeting of the Steering Committee of the multilateral mechanism for the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the use of Digital Sequence Information on Genetic Resources, including the Cali Fund was held online from 16 June 2025 to 18 June 2025.
2. The meeting was held in three sessions, from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. Montreal time over the three days.
3. The purpose of this foundational meeting was to give the Steering Committee members, alternates and observers an opportunity to become familiar with the Steering Committee, for the members to designate a co-chair among the members from Parties, and for members and observers to discuss governance, terms of reference and other operational documents as outlined in the provisional agenda ([MMDSI/SC/2025/1/1](#)).
4. Attendance was as follows:

Members from Parties: Mr. Daogo Ouoba (Burkina Faso), Ms. Mphatso Kalembe (Malawi), Mr. Desire Nemashakwe (Zimbabwe), Mr. Masatoshi Kobayashi (Japan), Mr. Bilal Qteshat (Jordan), Mr. Siva Kumar (Malaysia)¹, Mr. Aram Meymaryan (Armenia), Ms. Eliška Rolfová (Czechia), Mr. Florian Rabitz (Lithuania), Ms. Nneka Nicholas (Antigua and Barbuda), Mr. Patrick Luna (Brazil), Mr. Eduardo Silva Besa (Chile), Ms. Melissa Cotterill (Australia), Mr. William Lockhart (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), Ms. Mery Ciacchi (European Union)²,

Members from indigenous peoples and local communities: Mr. Daniel Mabengo (Africa), Ms. June Rubis (Asia), Ms. Yolanda Terán (Central and South America and the Caribbean), Mr. Aleksei Tsykarev (Central and Eastern Europe, Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia), Mr. Kyle Vermette (North America), Mr. Manu Caddie (The Pacific).

Alternate member: Mr. Ossama AbdelKawy (Egypt), Ms. Corina Sarli (Argentina).

Apologies were received from: Mr. Yujun Zhang (China), Ms. Inka Gnittke (Germany)³.

United Nations representatives: Ms. Astrid Schomaker (Co-chair) (United Nations Environment Programme), Mr. Marcos Neto and Ms. Midori Paxton (United Nations Development Programme).

United Nations observers: Ms. Doreen Lynn Robinson, Ms. Adrianna Rivera Brusatin and Mr. Santiago Carrizosa (United Nations Development Programme).

Ex-officio Member: Mr. Alain Noudehou, Ms. Assia Sidibe (United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office).

¹ Mr. Siva Kumar (alternate member) was invited to attend the Steering Committee as a full member in lieu of Mr. Yujun Zhang (China).

² Ms. Mery Ciacchi (alternate members) was invited to attend the Steering Committee as a full member in lieu of Ms. Inka Gnittke (Germany).

³ Ms. Inka Gnittke (Germany) introduced herself in the first part of the session and then left, leaving Ms. Merry Ciacchi stepping in for her.

Observers from the civil society, scientific institutions and the private sector, two respectively: Ms. Anita de Horde (Finance for Biodiversity), Mr. Nithin Ramakrishnan (Third World Network)⁴, Ms. Bupe Mwambingu (Synbio Africa), Ms. Amber Hartman Scholz (Leibniz Institute DSMZ)⁵, Ms. Daphne Yong-d'Hervé (International Chamber of Commerce), Mr. Bart Van Vooren (Personal Care Products Council)⁶.

The interim Secretariat of the Multilateral Mechanism for the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits from the Use of Digital Sequence Information on Genetic Resources, including the Cali Fund was represented by officers of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

I. Opening of the meeting

5. The first session of the meeting was opened on Monday, 16 June 2025 at 7 a.m. Montreal time by Ms. Astrid Schomaker, co-chair of the Steering Committee representing the United Nations Partners.

6. The co-chair invited Mr. Marcos Neto, Assistant Administrator and Director of Bureau of Policy and Programme Support at the United Nations Development Programme and Ms. Doreen Robinson, Acting Deputy Director of the Ecosystems Division at the United Nations Environment Programme to provide opening remarks.

II. Organizational matters

A. Introduction of the Committee members, observers and alternates

7. The co-chair invited Steering Committee members, alternates and observers to introduce themselves.

8. During the introductions, an alternate member raised three points regarding the anticipated participation of alternates and requested clarity on their roles. The co-chair noted that this issue will be addressed within the role of the steering committee agenda item.

B. Adoption of the agenda

9. In introducing the item, the co-chair acknowledged a letter that was sent to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity from the Argentine Republic objecting to the adoption of documents prepared for the meeting of the Steering Committee. As requested, the letter was subsequently shared with all Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, as well as the bureau of the Convention. This letter was further shared with members of the Steering Committee prior to the first session. The alternate member from the Argentine Republic was invited to present this letter to the committee.

10. Committee members discussed at length the provisional agenda taking into account the letter received, the role and the mandate of the Steering Committee and its relationship to the Conference of the Parties, and the distinctions between the Steering Committee and other formal CBD subsidiary bodies and committees.

11. Committee members supported amending the provisional agenda to reflect only the titles of the documents and delete the verbs to give space to appropriately decide the substantive actions relating to the documents after discussion on each document.

⁴ Also endorsed by: NGO Major Group and CBD Alliance.

⁵ Also endorsed by: DSI Scientific Network, Global Biodata Coalition, Global Genome Biodiversity Network, Working group on Access and Benefit sharing of the German Research Foundation Nagoya Protocol Hub

⁶ Also endorsed by: Associação Brasileira da Indústria de Higiene Pessoal, Perfumaria e Cosméticos, Consejo de las Asociaciones de la Industria Cosmética Latinoamericana, Cosmetics Alliance Canada, Cosmetics Europe, Koren Cosmetic Association, Organisation de la Fédération des Entreprises de la Beauté, Industrieverband Körperpflege- und Waschmittel.

12. Furthermore, committee members proposed to change the order of agenda item 4 and agenda item 5 to allow for the consideration of the rules of procedure before discussing the terms of reference of the Steering Committee.

13. The agenda was adopted with the proposed amendments.

III. Steering Committee organizational processes:

A. Role of the Committee

14. The role of the committee also arose during agenda item 2. The interim Secretariat displayed an infographic created only for the purpose of supporting discussions.

15. An overview of the circumstances of the opening of the Cali Fund was presented by the co-chair: It is a requirement of the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTFO) that a minimum of two UN partners request the opening of a multi-partner trust fund. In the case of the Cali Fund, UNEP and UNDP had formally made a request to the MPTFO. The establishment consists of a memorandum of understanding with terms of reference annexed. Both the memorandum of understanding and the terms of reference follow a standard format, the same as for all funds at the MPTFO. The Memorandum of Understanding of the Cali Fund was signed in Rome in February 2025 on the margins of the resumed session of COP-16. Therefore, the Cali Fund is under the legal governance and accountability framework of the MPTFO. Each Multi-Partner Trust Fund has a decision-making executive board to serve its fund. For the Cali Fund, this is the Steering Committee as called for by COP decision 16/2.

16. The co-chair further explained that as stated in the terms of reference of the Cali Fund, the Steering Committee of the Cali Fund also serves as the Steering Committee of the Multilateral Mechanism on Digital Sequence Information on Genetic Resources. Members of the Steering Committee therefore perform the functions as outlined in enclosure IV of Decision 16/2 and the additional functions as outlined in the terms of reference, as required by the MPTFO. The functions of the Steering Committee as stipulated in enclosure IV remain accountable to and within the Conference of the Parties process.

17. The interim Secretariat also explained that all members of the Steering Committee are expected to support the principles, spirit and intent of the Multilateral Mechanism, champion the Cali Fund, and initiate information sharing and engagement with peers, governments, the private sector, and others. It was emphasised by the interim Secretariat and the MPTFO that the role of the steering committee is not to negotiate, but to advise, to lead with integrity, foresight and a shared sense of responsibility with regard to the Cali Fund.

18. Some members sought further clarity on the role of the Steering Committee beyond enclosure IV of decision 16/2 and the expectation of their consideration of the documents presented.

19. The co-chair proposed that further informal sessions be held to provide additional information for clarity on the role and functions of a steering committee of a Multi-Partner Trust Fund and the terms of reference.

20. As the agenda item closed, alternate members were excused from the meeting.

B. Designation of the Co-Chair from among the members from Parties

21. The committee heard presentations from Mr. Patrick Luna from Brazil, Mr. Bilal Qteshat from Jordan, and Ms. Nneka Nicholas from Antigua and Barbuda regarding their respective nominations. The candidates were excused from the meeting while the Steering Committee discussed their candidacies.

22. The committee reached consensus and designated Ms. Nneka Nicholas from Antigua and Barbuda as the co-chair of the Steering Committee among the members from Parties.

IV. Rules of procedure for meetings of the Steering Committee

23. The interim Secretariat introduced the agenda item [MMDSI/SC/2025/1/3](#), the annex of which contained the proposed rules of procedure for the Steering Committee.
24. The interim Secretariat explained that the proposed rules of procedure in the annex of the document were prepared drawing from the following sources; the relevant provisions of decision 16/2, information on the terms of reference of the Cali Fund, rules of procedure for steering committees of other multi-partner trust funds hosted by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, and experience from rules of procedure for meetings of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and for meetings of the Compliance Committees under the Cartagena and Nagoya Protocols.
25. As stated in the terms of reference of the Cali Fund, the Secretariat is to prepare a proposal regarding terms of office to be endorsed by the Committee and then adopted by the Conference of the Parties. It was however proposed that the Steering Committee should first discuss the matter and so Rule 11 of the proposed Rules of Procedure is a placeholder until such discussion takes place in a future meeting of the Steering Committee.
26. Committee members and observers provided detailed feedback in relation to several of the draft rules and updated rules of procedure were shared via email with members and observers, which were further discussed in the third session of the meeting.
27. The third session resumed with the interim Secretariat rectifying its miscommunication with respect to the attendance of alternates at previous sessions. The attendance of alternates at future meetings was subsequently discussed and it was agreed to designate additional alternates for the observers and indigenous peoples and local communities. Indigenous peoples and local communities stated they wanted to revisit the issue of alternates for their group at the second meeting of the Steering Committee in September 2025. The interim Secretariat was asked by one Member to explore options to facilitate the attendance of all alternates in the second meeting of the Steering Committee in person. The interim Secretariat took note of the request whilst also noting that it could not guarantee their attendance as it was dependent on financial and logistics arrangements with the host country.
28. Additionally, the issues of conflict of interest and confidentiality of information was raised by the committee. The interim Secretariat was asked to prepare draft documents for each of those issues to be considered in future meetings. It was agreed that those would be stand-alone documents, and not part of the rules of procedure.
29. The co-chair closed this item by outlining that an updated version of the rules of procedure, including proposed text on rule 11, would be circulated for the committee's review through an email procedure. This reviewed version will be presented by the committee for consideration at the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

V. Terms of Reference of the Cali Fund

30. In introducing the item, the co-chair emphasized that terms of reference is an essential requirement for setting up a Multi-Partner Trust Fund, and as such the terms of reference was drafted by the interim Secretariat, UNDP, UNEP and the MPTFO. The terms of reference were a mandatory annex to the memorandum of understanding that was signed between UNEP and UNDP at the launch of the Cali Fund in February this year. The signature of such document was a necessary pre-condition to open the Cali Fund account with the MPTFO.
31. The Steering Committee heard a presentation on the terms of reference of the Cali Fund from the interim Secretariat, and from the United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office. The latter explained that the terms of reference, as well as all operational documents of the Cali Fund, are

subject to revision and amendments at the request of the Steering Committee in the future. These are not negotiated texts to be adopted, but rather living documents meant to evolve with the Cali Fund.

32. Some Steering Committee members expressed concerns about not having been given the opportunity to provide input into the development and drafting of the terms of reference. They further noted and expressed concern about some potential misrepresentation or interpretation of CBD decision 16/2. The committee requested the interim Secretariat to collect proposals for amending the text from the Steering Committee ahead of their second meeting in September 2025 and to circulate an updated text with a view to approving it at their up-coming meeting in September.

33. Some Steering Committee members emphasized the importance of remembering that although feedback will be collected, the terms of reference should not be negotiated as a decision text would but rather is an operational document subject to future revisions, when the need arises.

VI. Operations manual outline

34. The meeting ran out of time, and this item will be taken up at the next meeting of the Steering Committee.

VII. Project document for the Secretariat of the Multilateral Mechanism for the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits from the Use of Digital Sequence Information on Genetic Resources, including the Cali Fund.

35. The Steering Committee will be discussing this item at its second meeting.

36. The co-chair noted that until this document is approved, any funds for the staffing of the Secretariat of the multilateral mechanism, including the Cali Fund, cannot be disbursed by the MPTFO. As such, a limited number of CBD Secretariat officers will continue to serve as the interim Secretariat until such time as the project document is approved by the Steering Committee, and appropriate funds mobilised.

VIII. Resource mobilization strategy for the Cali Fund.

1. The meeting ran out of time, and this item will be taken up at the next meeting of the Steering Committee.

IX. Other matters.

2. In an effort to enhance communication, clarify the roles and functions of the Steering Committee and the Secretariat of the multilateral mechanism – including the Cali Fund, the interim Secretariat proposed holding informal online sessions. These sessions would present information on best practices from other Multi-Partner Trust Funds, as well as other topics relevant to the Steering Committee, including the terms of reference.

X. Outcomes of the meeting.

3. The co-chair summarised the outcomes of the meeting, namely:

(a) the rules of procedure will be updated and an email-process established to reach consensus prior to the second meeting of the Steering Committee.

(b) a process will be set up to collect feedback from the Steering Committee on the terms of reference ahead of the second meeting of the Steering Committee.

(c) the interim Secretariat will prepare an interest disclosure document and a document on confidential information for review by the Steering Committee at the second meeting of the Committee.

(d) the interim Secretariat will designate alternates for observers, in line with the process followed for the current composition of the Steering Committee.

4. The interim Secretariat will explore options for attendance of all members of the Steering Committee and alternates at the second meeting of the Steering Committee.

(a) the interim Secretariat will facilitate informal, additional information sharing sessions, prior to the second meeting of the Steering Committee.

5. The first meeting of the Steering Committee was adjourned at 10:24 AM on Wednesday, 18 June 2025.