
**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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Steering Committee

Third meeting

Cape Town, South Africa, 7–9 April 2026

Minutes of the meeting

1. The third 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 (DSI) (Multilateral Mechanism), including the Cali Fund, was held in Cape Town, South Africa from 7 to 9 April 2026. The meeting was hosted by the Government of South Africa and supported through the generous financial contributions of the Governments of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Government of Norway.

2. The purpose of the meeting was to build on progress achieved at previous meeting of the Steering Committee ([MMDSI/SC/2025/2/4](#)), through consideration of several operational documents related to the Cali Fund. These included documents concerning the Terms of Reference of the Cali Fund, the Operations Manual and the procedures for the handling of confidential information. The Steering Committee also considered technical matters, including the review methodology of the Multilateral Mechanism, including the Cali Fund, the capitalization strategy for the Cali Fund, and modalities for disbursements to indigenous peoples and local communities. In addition, the Steering Committee discussed the idea of a potential pilot or testing phase of the Cali Fund, as well as its report (including advice) to the seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the parties. The full list of agenda items is set out in the provisional agenda ([MMDSI/SC/3/1](#)).

3. Attendance was as follows:

(a) Members from Parties: Mr. Daogo Ouoba (Burkina Faso), Ms. Mphatso Kalemba (Malawi), Mr. Desire Nemashakwe (Zimbabwe), Mr. Masatoshi Kobayashi (Japan), Mr. Yujun Zhang (China), Mr. Florian Rabitz (Lithuania), Ms. Nneka Nicholas (co-chair) (Antigua and Barbuda), Mr. Patrick Luna (Brazil), Mr. Eduardo Silva Besa (Chile), Ms. Melissa Cotterill (Australia), Ms. Mery Ciacci (European Union).

(b) Members from the indigenous peoples and local communities: Ms. June Rubis (Asia), Mr. Kyle Vermette (North America), Mr. Aleksei Tsykarev (Central and Eastern Europe, Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia).

(c) Members from the Participating United Nations Organizations: Ms. Astrid Schomaker (co-chair) (United Nations Environment Programme), Ms. Adriana Rivera-Brusatin (United Nations Environment Programme), Mr. Santiago Carrizosa (United Nations Development Programme).

(d) Observers from the civil society, scientific institutions and the private sector, two respectively: Ms. Emily Murugi (Morobe Development Foundation), Mr. Nithin Ramakrishnan (Third World Network), Ms. Bupe Mwambingu (Synbio Africa), Ms. Amber Hartman Scholz (Leibniz Institute DSMZ), Ms. Daphne Yong-d'Hervé (International Chamber of Commerce), Mr. Bart Van Vooren (Personal Care Products Council).

(e) Apologies were received from: Ms. Inka Gnittke (Germany), Mr. Belal Qtishat (Jordan), Mr. Aram Meymaryan (Armenia), Ms. Eliška Rolfová (Czechia), Ms. Yolanda Terán (Central and South America and the Caribbean), Mr. Daniel Mabengo (Africa), Ms. Anita de Horde (observer,

civil society, Finance for Biodiversity), Mr. Manu Caddie (The Pacific), Ms. Assia Sidibe (United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office).

(f) 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 three officers and one assistant from the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

I. Opening of the meeting

4. The first session of the meeting was opened on Tuesday, 7 April 2026 at 9 a.m. by Ms. Astrid Schomaker and Ms. Nneka Nicholas, co-chairs of the Steering Committee. The co-chairs offered their sincere appreciation to the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Government of Norway for their generous support in providing funding for the meeting, and to the Government of South Africa and the South African National Biodiversity Institute for hosting the meeting and the excellent logistical arrangements.

5. Mr. Narend Singh, Deputy Minister for Forest Fisheries and Environment, South Africa, joined the Steering Committee for the opening of the meeting and delivered welcome remarks. He also set the context for a presentation by Ms. Theresa Frantz of the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) and Ms. Natalie Feltman from the Department of Forest Fisheries and the Environment. The presentation, delivered during the final session of the first day, highlighted their respective areas of work and were followed by an exchange of views with the members of the Steering Committee.

II. Organizational matters

6. Members of the Steering Committee provided updates on the intersessional work undertaken since the second meeting of the Steering Committee held in September 2025. The Committee received updates on the Informal Global Dialogue on DSI and the Cali Fund, hosted by the European Commission in Leuven, Belgium in March 2026 (as part of the broader informal process supported by the EU and the Government of Norway to facilitate common understanding and enhance dialogue between Parties and stakeholders on the way to COP17). The meeting was held under Chatham House rules and gathered around 40 participants from Parties, indigenous peoples and local communities, industry and research institutions to informally exchange their views on accelerating the operationalization of the multilateral mechanism and the Cali Fund. Enabling conditions for contributions into the Cali Fund, issues of accountability and approaches to non-monetary benefit sharing as well as proposals for a pilot or testing phase of the Cali Fund were discussed. In addition, an update was provided on the work of the Friends of the Cali Fund, noting that the group continues its efforts to build trust and promote engagement with governments and other stakeholders, including through the preparation of a joint declaration and plans for engagement during the London Climate Week (June 2026).

7. The interim Secretariat updated the Committee on work undertaken during the intersessional period since the last meeting. This included highlights of work initiated by two consultants one focusing on the development of the review methodology for the multilateral mechanism and the Cali Fund and another providing support for the development of the Cali Fund Operations Manual. A third consultant, tasked with supporting the communication and engagement strategy of the Cali Fund is in the process of being onboarded. In addition, the interim Secretariat, with support from three communication interns, launched the Cali Fund website and a professional LinkedIn account and continues carry out broader outreach activities.

8. The Steering Committee agreed to the agenda as circulated prior to the meeting via email. The Steering Committee then welcomed a tentative schedule of the meeting ahead.

III. Terms of reference

9. The interim Secretariat presented to the Steering Committee the three remaining sections of the Terms of Reference for their revision and finalisation. These sections related to Participating Organizations, Reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Audit. The Steering Committee discussed and agreed on the proposed revisions, thereby completing its consideration of the Terms of Reference. The Steering Committee further instructed the interim Secretariat to finalise the revised version for publication and to develop the programmatic document template, with associated guidance.

IV. Confidential information: procedures and handling

10. The interim Secretariat presented a draft document for the consideration of the Steering Committee. It was clarified that the document applies only to Steering Committee members, alternates and observers. It was further noted that UN Partners and the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office will handle confidentiality in accordance with the rules, policy and procedures of their respective UN entities. Several aspects of the document were identified as requiring legal clarification and further elaboration, and the Steering Committee agreed to convene an intersessional online, meeting with legal officers to consider the draft further.

V. Manual of operations

11. The interim Secretariat presented a draft outline of each chapter of the Operations Manual, which broadly consists of nine chapters: introduction; governance arrangements; Fund administration; programmatic cycle; monitoring, evaluation, reporting, audit and learning; risk management; Fund closure; communication and public disclosure; amendment of the operations manual. The Steering Committee gave its views on several areas to aid the drafting of the operations manual, including:

(a) On the innovative approach of the Cali Fund in relation to direct allocations rather than competitive projects, which should be reflected in the programmatic document template. The Secretariat could also assess programmatic documents against a determined checklist.

(b) In relation to programmatic cycles, a tranche approach to disbursement is to be carefully considered via an online, intersessional meeting.

(c) On the role of the narrative reporting template, this is to be considered further via an online, intersessional meeting.

(d) The consideration of risks, including those relating to predictability of contributions.

12. The Steering Committee gave its approval to the interim Secretariat to develop a first full draft of the Operations Manual for its consideration.

VI. Review methodology

13. The interim Secretariat presented the previously circulated concept note as developed by the consultant on the review of effectiveness of the multilateral mechanism, including the Cali Fund, as described in Enclosure IV paragraph 1(d) of decision 16/2, which is to be considered by the Subsidiary Body on Implementation at its seventh meeting in August 2026.

14. The concept note introduces an evaluation framework proposal, including six evaluation pillars: P1-Resource Mobilization & Distribution, P2-Trigger Design, Efficiency & Costs, P3-Non-Monetary Benefits, P4-KMGBF Contribution & Legal Certainty on legal certainty, P5- Coherence with ABS & Other Instruments and P6-Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities' Rights, Open Access & Research Impacts. Each of the pillars maps to the factors as identified in Enclosure VI.

15. The concept note also includes five enabling conditions to provide key insights into the diagnostics of the mechanism: EC1-Industry Awareness, EC2-Business-Case, EC3-Legal Certainty, EC4-National Readiness and EC5-Governance Quality and Political Will. These will allow to distinguish mechanism design failures from implementation environment failures.

16. Finally, a governance assessment will track both the quality of governance and pace of the governance's setup. It has six sub-dimensions: decision making and inclusiveness, transparency and timeliness, management response quality, institutional coherence, fiduciary & financial integrity and governance setup processes.

17. The Steering Committee endorsed the concept note, agreeing to participate in online, intersessional meetings as required by the consultant.

VII. Disbursements to indigenous peoples and local communities

18. For this discussion, the Steering Committee had two papers which were prepared by several members of the Steering Committee to aid the discussion. The first paper was an operational note which provided suggested operational guidance on implementation of paragraph 21 of decision 16/2. The second paper provided a summary of delivery pathways to operationalize a disbursement to indigenous peoples and local communities. It presented three options which broadly reflect the varying interpretations that are understood by the Steering Committee of paragraph 21 of decision 16/2:

(a) Option 1: Direct access through indigenous peoples and local communities-identified institutions. Funds are channelled through institutions identified by indigenous peoples and local communities themselves, with appropriate safeguards for transparency, accountability, and fiduciary standards. This option reflects the possibility of direct access and is particularly relevant where credible indigenous peoples and local communities' institutions exist or are being developed.

(b) Option 2: National-level delivery through designated entities. Funds are channelled through nationally designated entities or government-linked arrangements, with provisions to ensure transparency, accountability, and meaningful indigenous peoples and local communities' participation. This option reflects the role of national circumstances in shaping delivery pathways.

(c) Option 3: Hybrid/context specific approach. A flexible approach in which countries may utilize a combination of pathways, including direct indigenous peoples and local communities-identified institutions and intermediary entities, depending on context. This option avoids a single prescribed model and allows for adaptive implementation.

19. The Steering Committee engaged in a detailed discussion on the available options. During the discussions members representing indigenous peoples and local communities indicated their preference for the first option. The Steering Committee reached consensus on the three options and agreed that recipient government should determine whether to apply option 1, 2 or 3.

20. The Steering Committee also recognized and emphasized the need for capacity building for recipient organizations, while underscoring the importance of flexibility, in light of differing national circumstances. Several Members further highlighted the challenges involved in engaging and coordinating national governments on this issue.

21. The Steering Committee broadly recognized that this discussion focused on the disbursement of the funds to indigenous peoples and local communities, and that the allocation may need to be determined via an allocation formula or another model. Linkages with the Ad-Hoc Technical Expert Group on the allocation methodology to Parties were noted, and the Steering Committee requested the interim Secretariat to organize a joint meeting to receive an update on the progress and developments in the work of the Ad-Hoc Technical Expert Group given the close linkage.

22. The Steering Committee agreed that further guidance on disbursements to indigenous peoples and local communities may be advised to the Conference of the Parties in their report.

VIII. Certificates issued under decision 16/2 and resource capitalization strategy

23. The Steering Committee considered the role of certificates alongside the broader topic of resource capitalization for the Cali Fund.

24. Members recapped the different perspectives on the purpose of the certificate and the conditions for its issuance, referring to paragraph 15 of the annex to decision 15/2. The urgency of further work on certificate was appreciated by all, and a small working group was established to continue this work (see Annex I). The work of the Friends of the Cali Fund was identified as relevant for the certificates, and continued communication with the group was encouraged.

25. On resource capitalization, the interim Secretariat provided an update on the large volume of requests for presentations and interventions on the Cali Fund from external stakeholders as well as questions from journalists, which were deemed unsustainable for the current capacity of the interim Secretariat. The engagement of individuals on Steering Committee in similar presentations was encouraged, using materials developed by the interim Secretariat. The Steering Committee recognized that much of the work relating to certificates, disbursements and other topics also contributes to a wider resource capitalization strategy and stakeholder engagement. The Steering Committee instructed the interim Secretariat to create a list of these activities for their report.

IX. Pilot of the Cali Fund

26. A Member of the Steering Committee presented on the idea of a ‘pilot’, or ‘testing phase’, of the Cali Fund as raised in the Informal Global Dialogue on DSI and the Cali Fund. The informal meeting identified several aspects to potentially test: ‘money-out’ and the disbursement management processes, the certification system and the enabling conditions for ‘money-into’ the Cali Fund. In addition, possible principles of the testing phase were discussed: testing phases should be informal and experimental; should not prejudice decision 16/2; should uphold transparency and be guided by evidence and previous experience; aim at improving and building trust in the system. From the informal meeting discussions, several Parties and industry are interested in participating in a testing phase and asked how to connect these inputs with the formal process (including the Steering Committee).

27. The Steering Committee recognised that it is responsible for requesting disbursements from the Cali Fund to the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office and therefore agreed that it should be directly involved in any testing phase of the Cali Fund.

28. The Steering Committee expressed broad agreement that a testing phase could be used to assess to assess different aspects relevant to the operationalisation of the multilateral mechanism and the Cali Fund. Further, discussions considered which elements may be appropriate to test, for example: contribution process, direct allocation to Parties, direct allocation to indigenous peoples and local communities, impact reporting and an acknowledgement of contributions may be more appropriate to test and; the testing phase may not be able to test an allocation methodology, legal certainty and the indicative contribution rates. Several members referenced other environmental funds that have conducted testing phases, citing their successful but lengthy process. Discussions also entailed ensuring that work is not duplicated, that a testing phase should not duplicate the efforts currently underway by the Steering Committee, recognizing capacity considerations, including the readiness recipient countries and the limited capacity of the interim Secretariat, as well as aligning any testing phase with the review process mandated for the Conference of the Parties at its eighteenth meeting.

29. Most of the Steering Committee recognised the value of a testing phase and agreed that further consideration was required, including the development of a detailed proposal outlining which modalities could be tested, the proposed start of the testing phase, the level of available capitalization,

and its expected duration. Overall, the Steering Committee acknowledged it would play a leading role in any future pilot or testing phase.

30. A small group of the Steering Committee was created to advance work on a testing phase with the support of the interim Secretariat and consultations with external stakeholders, and report back to the wider Steering Committee.

X. Considerations for the draft report for the seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties

31. The interim Secretariat presented a draft outline of the report to the Conference of the Parties. The Committee provided further guidance on the sections of the report, including on disbursements to indigenous peoples and local communities, non-monetary benefit sharing, and enabling conditions for contributions to the Cali Fund. Additional topics were identified for inclusion in the report, including progress on the potential testing phase of the Cali Fund, and joint work conducted the Ad-Hoc Technical Expert Group on allocation methodology.

32. There was agreement from the Steering Committee that the interim Secretariat should begin a first draft of the report for the consideration at its next meeting.

XI. Others matters

1. The Steering Committee expressed its appreciation to the work accomplished to date and noted that this would be its last in-person meeting prior to the anticipated rotation of half of its members following the seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, as proposed in the Rules of Procedure. They also conveyed their appreciation for the work of the interim Secretariat, noting the significant and increasing demands placed on the limited staff supporting the interim Secretariat alongside their responsibilities as staff of the Convention.

2. The Steering Committee agreed to convene a one-day virtual meeting in August, with the possibility of holding earlier online meetings, as needed, for adoption of essential documents.

XII. Outcomes of the meeting

3. The outcomes of the meeting were summarised as follows:

(a) The revised Terms of Reference of the Cali Fund is agreed by the Steering Committee and will be prepared for publication on the Cali Fund website and gateway.

(b) Intersessional online meetings on confidential information: procedures and handling, with the specific participation of legal officers.

(c) The consultant working on the Operations Manual and will convene online, intersessional meetings to consider:

(i) any tranche approach to funding, to inform the drafting of the Operations Manual

(ii) a draft programmatic document template, and associated guidance

(d) The consultant working on the review methodology will utilise online, intersessional meetings as required and work with a view for the Steering Committee to present the methodology at the seventh meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation.

(e) The Steering Committee will continue to consider disbursements to indigenous peoples and local communities, including through discussions with the Ad-Hoc Technical Expert Group on allocation methodology.

(f) A small group was created with the mandate on certificates as identified in Annex I.

(g) The interim Secretariat, with the support of its consultant, will develop a resource capitalization and engagement strategy to be circulated with the Steering Committee for its consideration.

(h) A small group was created to explore a pilot/testing phase of the Cali Fund and will consider further actions with the wider Steering Committee as a matter of priority.

(i) The interim Secretariat will draft a first draft of the report and advice from the Steering Committee to the Conference of the Parties at its seventeenth meeting, to be considered through online meetings.

(j) The interim Secretariat will propose a time for the next online meeting in August 2026.

Annex I: Mandate: Small Work Group on Certificates for the Cali Fund:

The group agrees to work on:

1. Certificate/recognition at or above the (indicative) contribution rates as determined by the CBD COP at the time of the contribution (currently decision 16/2).
2. 'Interim' certificate/document of acknowledgement/recognition for contributions below the (indicative) contribution rate as determined by the CBD COP at the time of the contribution.
 - (a) This could be as a general 'different' certificate
 - (b) This could be a contribution-rate/sum/time-limited certificate
3. Report of the Steering Committee for COP17.

Output from the group:

4. For the purpose of aiding the interim Secretariat the Steering Committee in providing a report to the Steering Committee for COP17:
 - (a) Compilation of elements/reflections on the topic of the certificate broadly defined, including any elements of convergences and divergences
 - (b) Any advice to or clarification that the Steering Committee needs from the COP
 - (c) This will be given to the Secretariat in order to aid in the preparation of the draft report to the Steering Committee for its consideration
5. A draft certificate/elements of a certificate, collecting language that the group agree would be helpful to integrate.
 - (a) This is for internal use only until the certificate language is ready for potential next steps if the entire Steering Committee decides.

Membership: all members, observers and alternates are welcome to join the group.

All those interested have to contact the Secretariat no later than Tuesday 14th April. The Secretariat will facilitate invitations and communications with the group.