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Convention on Biological Diversity

Capacity-building workshop on synthetic biology
Isle of Vilm, Germany, 3–7 November 2025

Annotated provisional agenda

Introduction

1. In its decision 16/21, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity requested Parties to provide financial and technical support for capacity-building and development and technology transfer initiatives, including for research and development and assessment, in the field of synthetic biology. In the same decision, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity to facilitate, subject to the availability of resources, capacity-building activities on synthetic biology.

2. In response to that request, the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation of Germany and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, with financial support from the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Climate Action, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of Germany, are co-organizing a capacity-building workshop on synthetic biology, to be held on the Isle of Vilm, Germany, from 3 to 7 November 2025.

3. The aim of the workshop is to provide participants with a platform for: becoming better acquainted with the processes related to synthetic biology under the Convention on Biological Diversity, learning about the most recent developments within the field of synthetic biology and exchanging experiences and information related to this field. Moreover, the workshop can provide an opportunity for participants to gain an understanding of different regional needs for capacity-building and development, access to and transfer of technology and knowledge-sharing, which may support the preparation of the thematic action plan requested by the Conference of the Parties in decision 16/21.

4. The workshop, to be conducted in English, will comprise plenary presentations, work carried out in small groups, reports back to plenary and open discussions. Documents for the course will be posted on the website of the Secretariat.[1] To minimize the environmental impact of the course, no documents will be printed on site.

Item 1
Opening of the workshop

5. The workshop will be opened on Monday, 3 November 2025, at 7.30 p.m. Representatives of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation of Germany will deliver opening remarks.

[1] See www.cbd.int/meetings/SYNBIO-WS-2025-01.

6. Following the opening remarks, representatives of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation will explain the objectives of the workshop and present the proposed organization of work (see annex below).

7. Participants will then be invited to introduce themselves.

Item 2
Synthetic biology under the Convention on Biological Diversity

8. A representative of the Secretariat will provide an overview of synthetic biology under the Convention on Biological Diversity with an emphasis on the publication entitled *Synthetic Biology*,[2] the Kunming-Montreal Global Diversity Framework and decisions on synthetic biology. The goal of this session will be to raise awareness of the unique position of the Convention within the field of synthetic biology.

Item 3
Overview of recent developments in synthetic biology

9. Experts, including representatives of the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation of Germany, the Central Committee on Biological Safety of Germany and members of the resource team, will present overviews of recent projects that have been undertaken, including horizon scanning projects on, for example, synthetic biology-related developments in the areas of microorganisms, viruses and animals; and research on the integration of artificial intelligence into the field of synthetic biology, as well as a summary of discussions at the recent Spirit of Asilomar and the Future of Biotechnology conference.[3]

10. A select number of participants will be provided with the opportunity to give a short presentation on ongoing research and developments related to synthetic biology in their country.

Item 4
Needs for capacity-building and development, access to and transfer of technology and knowledge-sharing in the context of synthetic biology

11. Consideration of this item will facilitate dynamic discussions on the needs for capacity-building, technology transfer and knowledge-sharing in the context of synthetic biology, with a specific focus on regional experiences and assessment of potential impacts on the three objectives under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

12. The item will be addressed mainly in groups. This will be followed by reporting back to plenary, where an opportunity will be provided for discussion. Sessions under this agenda item will be held daily, as the topic is relevant to items 3 and 5.

Item 5
New developments in synthetic biology and their implications for assessment

13. The focus under this item will be on discussing the most recent technological developments related to specific areas within the field of synthetic biology, with an emphasis on potential implications for assessment. The tentative list of those specific areas includes artificial intelligence, microorganisms, enabling technologies and tools.

[2] CBD Technical Series, No. 100 (Montreal, Canada, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2022). Available at www.cbd.int/doc/publications/cbd-ts-100-en.pdf.
[3] Held from 23 to 26 February 2025 in Pacific Grove, United States of America.

Item 6
Conclusions of the workshop

14. A survey will be conducted with a view to collecting feedback on the workshop anonymously.

15. Participants will have an opportunity to share their reflections.

Item 7
Closure of the workshop

16. The workshop will conclude with a farewell dinner, to be held on Thursday, 6 November 2025.

Annex

Proposed organization of work

Date and time	*Agenda item*
Monday, 3 November 2025	
4–6 p.m.	*Arrival of participants* *Ferry crossings at 4.10 p.m., 5.10 p.m. and 6.10 p.m. from Lauterbach Mole port, with the last possible crossing at 8.10 p.m. and a transfer time of approximately 10 minutesRegistration of participants*
6–7.30 p.m.	*Dinner*
7.30–8.30 p.m.	Item 1. Opening of the workshop
8.30 p.m.	*Getting acquainted event*
Tuesday, 4 November 2025	
7.30–9 a.m.	*Breakfast*
9–10.30 a.m.	Item 2. Synthetic biology under the Convention on Biological Diversity
10.30–11 a.m.	*Coffee break*
11 a.m.–12.30 p.m.	Item 3. Overview of recent developments in synthetic biology
12.30–1.30 p.m.	*Lunch break*
1.30–3.30 p.m.	Item 3 (*continued*)
3.30–4 p.m.	*Coffee break*
4–5.30 p.m.	Item 4. Needs for capacity-building and development, access to and transfer of technology and knowledge-sharing in the context of synthetic biology
6 p.m.	*Dinner*
7.30 p.m.	*Informal networking and get-together*
Wednesday, 5 November 2025	
7.30 a.m.	*Breakfast*
9–10.30 a.m.	Item 3 (*continued*)
10.30–11 a.m.	*Coffee break*
11 a.m.–12.30 p.m.	Item 5. New developments in synthetic biology and implications for assessment
12.30–1.30 p.m.	*Lunch break*
1.30–4 p.m.	*Island tour (meeting point: International Academy for Nature Conservation conference centre)*
4–4.30 p.m.	*Coffee break*
4.30–5.30 p.m.	Item 4 (*continued*)
6–7 p.m.	*Dinner*
7.30 p.m.	*Informal networking and get-together*

Thursday, 6 November 2025	
7.30–9 a.m.	*Breakfast*
9–10.30 a.m.	Item 5 (*continued*)
10.30–11 a.m.	*Coffee break*
11 a.m.–12.30 p.m.	Item 5 (*continued*)
12.30–1.30 p.m.	*Lunch break*
1.30–3.30 p.m.	Item 4 (*continued*)
3.30–4 p.m.	*Coffee break*
4–5.30 p.m.	Item 6. Conclusions of the workshop Item 7. Closure of the workshop
6 p.m.	*Special farewell dinner*
Friday, 7 November 2025	
7.30 a.m.	*Breakfast (a breakfast package is provided for those who leave early)*
7.25–9.20 a.m.	*Departure of participants*