



Convention on Biological Diversity

Distr.: Limited
30 October 2024

Original: English

Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity Sixteenth meeting

Cali, Colombia, 21 October–1 November 2024

Agenda item 24

Synthetic biology

Working Group II

Synthetic biology

Draft decision submitted by the Chair of Working Group II

The Conference of the Parties,

[

Recalling the call made by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety¹ in its decision BS-VII/12 of 3 October 2014 for a coordinated approach on the issue of synthetic biology, taking into account the fact that the provisions of the Protocol may also apply to living organisms resulting from synthetic biology,

Recalling also decisions [14/19](#) of 29 November 2018 and [15/31](#) of 19 December 2022,

Reaffirming decision [15/8](#) of 19 December 2022 on capacity-building and development and technical and scientific cooperation and the guiding principles contained in annex II thereto,

Re-emphasizing the application of a precautionary approach, in accordance with the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity,² for the environmental release of the applications of synthetic biology,

Recognizing the relationship of the field of synthetic biology with Target 17 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework established in decision [15/4](#) of 19 December 2022,

Noting the potential positive and negative impacts of synthetic biology applications in relation to the objectives of the Convention and the goals and targets of the Framework,

Acknowledging that a multidisciplinary and Party-driven approach is essential for assessing the potential impacts of synthetic biology on the objectives of the Convention and its Protocols,

Recognizing the inequity in the participation of developing countries in the research and development, assessment and regulation in the field of synthetic biology and the importance of addressing impacts,

¹ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2226, No. 30619.

² United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1760, No. 30619.

Acknowledging the work of the multidisciplinary Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Synthetic Biology and the outcomes of the broad and regular horizon scanning, monitoring and assessment of the most recent technological developments in synthetic biology,

]

1. *Emphasizes* the urgent need for capacity-building and development, access to and transfer of technology and knowledge-sharing for synthetic biology, in particular for developing country Parties, to achieve the goals and targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework;

2. *Urges* Parties, and invites relevant organizations, to provide financial and technical support for capacity-building and development and technology transfer initiatives in developing countries, in particular the least developed countries and small island developing States, and countries with economies in transition, including for research and development and assessment in the field of synthetic biology;

3. *Calls upon* Parties and other stakeholders to facilitate broad international cooperation, technology transfer, knowledge-sharing and capacity-building and development related to synthetic biology, taking the needs of Parties, indigenous peoples and local communities, women and youth into account;

4. *Encourages* Parties to submit their needs and priorities related to synthetic biology in the context of the Framework, including through the regional and subregional support centres of the technical and scientific cooperation mechanism;

5. *Decides* to develop a thematic action plan to support capacity-building and development, access to and transfer of technology and knowledge-sharing in the context of synthetic biology, building upon the needs and priorities of Parties, especially for developing country Parties, in particular the least developed countries and small island developing States, and countries with economies in transition, for the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Framework, in line with the long-term strategic framework for capacity-building and development,³ while avoiding duplication with existing plans and strategies under the Convention and its Protocols,⁴ taking into account:

(a) The specific needs of Parties and indigenous peoples and local communities that are complementary to the capacity-building action plan of the Cartagena Protocol, as identified in their submissions of information made further to the request in paragraph 7;

(b) The identification of areas where capacity-building and development, access to and transfer of technology and knowledge-sharing are needed for research and development and assessment in the field of synthetic biology;

(c) Strategies to facilitate the equitable participation of developing country Parties, indigenous peoples and local communities, women, youth, academia, the business sector and relevant institutions in research and development in the field of synthetic biology;

(d) Strategies to promote the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from synthetic biology, in line with Articles 16 and 19 of the Convention and the Framework;

(e) Mechanisms for technology transfer, knowledge-sharing and international technical and scientific cooperation to foster innovation, in line with Articles 16 and 18 of the Convention and the Framework;

6. *Establishes* a new ad hoc technical expert group on synthetic biology, in accordance with the terms of reference contained in the annex to the present decision;

³ Decision [15/8, annex I](#).

⁴ In particular the capacity-building action plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (decision [CP-10/4, annex](#)).

7. *Invites* Parties, other Governments, indigenous peoples and local communities, women, youth, academia, research institutions, the business sector and other relevant organizations to submit information on their experiences, needs and priorities related to synthetic biology to support the preparation of the thematic action plan and also related to other processes and initiatives on capacity-building and development, access to and transfer of technology and knowledge-sharing related to synthetic biology;

8. *Also invites* Parties, other Governments, indigenous peoples and local communities, women, youth, academia, research institutions, the business sector and other relevant organizations to submit information on their priority areas related to synthetic biology, including the most recent technological developments, relevant to the three objectives of the Convention and the Framework, to inform the work of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Synthetic Biology outlined in paragraph 3 of the annex to the present decision;

|

9. *Requests* the Executive Secretary, subject to the availability of resources,:

(a) To prepare a thematic action plan to support capacity-building and development, access to and transfer of technology and knowledge-sharing in the context of synthetic biology, as referred to in paragraph 5;

[(b) To commission an independent scientific study compiling and summarizing existing scientific studies, public research and development funding needs and priorities, as well as research road maps on synthetic biology applications that are relevant to achieving the Framework, in particular its Targets 4, 6, 7, 8, 10[, 13] and 17;]

(c) To synthesize the submissions of information pursuant to paragraphs 7, 8 and 9 (f);

(d) To submit a draft of the thematic action plan for a peer review before the twenty-eighth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice;

(e) To create a dedicated webpage to promote the thematic action plan and facilitate knowledge-sharing in the context of synthetic biology;

(f) To convene online discussions of the Open-ended Online Forum on Synthetic Biology in order to support the work of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Synthetic Biology;

(g) To convene at least one in-person meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Synthetic Biology;

(h) To support the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in the work relevant to synthetic biology undertaken under the Convention, in accordance with decision [X/40](#) of 29 October 2010;

(i) To support further the participation of women, youth and academia in the work relevant to synthetic biology undertaken under the Convention;

(j) To facilitate capacity-building on horizon scanning, monitoring and assessment of the most recent technological developments in synthetic biology;

|

|

10. *Requests* the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, at its twenty-eighth meeting, to consider the outcomes of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Synthetic Biology and make recommendations to the Conference of the Parties at its seventeenth meeting;

11. *Requests* the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, at its sixth or seventh meeting, to consider the thematic action plan and make recommendations to the Conference of the Parties at its seventeenth meeting.

I

Annex**Terms of reference for the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Synthetic Biology**

1. The Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Synthetic Biology will be convened in compliance with section H of the consolidated modus operandi of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice.⁵
2. The procedure for avoiding or managing conflicts of interest in expert groups set out in the annex to decision [14/33](#) of 29 November 2018 shall apply to the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Synthetic Biology.
3. The Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Synthetic Biology will:
 - (a) [Review][Synthesize] the compilations of submissions and the summary of the Open-Ended Online Forum on Synthetic Biology referred to in paragraph 9 (c) of the present decision, and the scientific study referred to in paragraph 9 (b), taking into account the draft thematic action plan and other existing relevant technical information;
 - (b) Build upon previous relevant work under the Convention on Biological Diversity⁶ and its Protocols;
 - (c) Identify the [[current] and [potential]] benefits of synthetic biology related to the three objectives of the Convention and the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework;
 - (d) Identify the potential positive impacts of the most recent technological developments in synthetic biology related to the three objectives of the Convention and the implementation of the Framework;
 - (e) Identify the potential negative impacts of the most recent technological developments in synthetic biology related to the three objectives of the Convention and the implementation of the Framework;
 - (f) Provide advice on how capacity-building and development, access to and transfer of technology and knowledge-sharing in synthetic biology can be taken into account with respect to the draft thematic action plan, in the light of future developments of synthetic biology and the implementation of the objectives of the Conventions and the Framework;
 - (g) Prepare a report of its work for consideration by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice.

⁵ Decision [VIII/10](#), annex III.

⁶ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1760, No. 30619.