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Synthetic biology: thematic action plan to support capacity-building and development, access to and transfer of technology and knowledge-sharing

Synthetic biology: thematic action plan to support capacity-building and development, access to and transfer of technology and knowledge-sharing**

Note by the Secretariat

I. Introduction

1. In decision [16/21](#), the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity decided 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 for the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, in line with the long-term strategic framework for capacity-building and development,¹ while avoiding duplication with existing plans and strategies under the Convention and its Protocols. The thematic action plan should take the specific needs of Parties and indigenous peoples and local communities into account.
2. In the same decision, the Executive Secretary was requested to prepare a draft thematic action plan and submit the plan for a peer review before the twenty-eighth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice.
3. The Subsidiary Body on Implementation was requested by the Conference of the Parties to review the implementation aspects of the thematic action plan.
4. The present document contains a description of the activities undertaken pursuant to the requests in decision [16/21](#) (sect. II) and a draft recommendation for consideration by the Subsidiary Body (sect. III). The annex contains information related to the extrabudgetary resources required to implement the requests to the Executive Secretary contained in the draft decision.

II. Overview of the process set out in decision [16/21](#)

A. Development of the thematic action plan

5. In response to the requests in decision [16/21](#), the Secretariat issued notifications Nos. [2025-065](#) and [2025-088](#) inviting Parties, other Governments, indigenous peoples and local

* [CBD/SBI/7/1](#).

** The present document is being issued without formal editing with the exception of the draft decision in section III.

¹ Decision [15/8](#), annex I.

communities, women organizations, youth organizations, academia, research institutions, the business sector and relevant organizations to submit information on synthetic biology to inform the preparation of the thematic action plan. A total of 29 submissions² on synthetic biology were received from 19 Parties,³ the secretariat of one multilateral environmental agreement⁴ and nine organizations.⁵ The synthesis of information received is presented in document [CBD/SYNBIO/AHTEG/2026/1/INF/1](#).

6. The Secretariat then commissioned the Institute of Genetics and Cytology of the National Academy of Science of Belarus to assist with the preparation of the draft thematic action plan.

7. Through notification No. [2025-149](#), the first draft of the thematic action plan was submitted for peer review. In response to this notification, 36 submissions⁶ were received from 17 Parties,⁷ one non-Party⁸ and 18 organizations.⁹ The Institute of Genetics and Cytology and the Secretariat then finalized the thematic action plan in response to the comments received during the peer review process.¹⁰

8. In the initial draft of the thematic action plan, indicators were included. However, in response to the peer review and considering that the indicative actions included in the thematic action plan are voluntary, indicators could not be further developed or refined. The indicators have therefore been removed from the thematic action plan.

9. In considering the work undertaken with respect to the Convention, including the variety of action plans and plans of action that have been developed, the capacity-building action plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety¹¹ and the capacity-building and development action plan for the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization¹² were identified as the only action plans with capacity-building elements with direct relevance to synthetic biology. Thus, no further mapping of the plans developed under the Convention was conducted. However, reference to these other plans was made where appropriate. In addition, other relevant plans and strategies developed in other international bodies were also referenced to promote a complementary approach with respect to the broad field of synthetic biology.

10. The updated draft thematic action plan is provided in document CBD/SBI/7/8/Add.1.

B. Meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Synthetic Biology

11. The Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Synthetic Biology met from 19 to 22 May 2026. The meeting was attended by 16 experts from Parties, one expert from non-Parties, one expert from indigenous peoples and local communities, one expert from women organizations, one expert from youth organizations and eight experts from observer organizations.

² The submissions received were made available through the [Biosafety Clearing-House](#).

³ Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, European Union, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Mexico, Niger, Spain, Thailand, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

⁴ Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

⁵ African Society for Synthetic Biology, Central Committee on Biological Safety, ETC Group, Federation of German Scientists, Global Industry Coalition, Global Youth Biodiversity Network, McMaster University, Testbiotech, Third World Network.

⁶ The comments received have been made available through the [Biosafety Clearing-House](#).

⁷ Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Egypt, El Salvador, France, Germany, Guyana, Lithuania, Mexico, Niger, Panama, Slovenia and South Africa.

⁸ United States of America.

⁹ African Centre for Biodiversity, Cabot Institute for the Environment, CBD Women's Caucus/Eco Maxei, ETC Group, Federation of German Scientists, Friends of Earth U.S., Foundation for Future Farming/Save Our Seeds, GeneEthics, German Association for Synthetic Biology, Ghent University, Global Industry Coalition, Global Youth Biodiversity Network, Global Youth Online Union, International Union for Conservation of Nature, McMaster University, Pollinis, Rio Institute and Third World Network.

¹⁰ Responses to the comments are available at www.cbd.int/synbio/current_activities/thematic.shtml.

¹¹ Decision [CP-10/4](#), annex.

¹² Decision [NP-5/3](#), annex.

12. As part of their terms of reference contained in the annex to decision [16/21](#), the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group was requested to 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 Convention and the Framework.

13. In that regard, the Expert Group emphasized that the approach taken with respect to future developments in synthetic biology should be agile and forward-looking in nature. The Group noted that Parties would benefit from horizon scanning and monitoring activities in order to identify realistic applications and emerging developments, while applying a precautionary approach.

14. The Expert Group additionally noted the importance of the thematic action plan remaining responsive to broader cross-cutting issues, including biosecurity and biosafety concerns, regulatory, liability and redress, equity considerations, environmental and social safeguards, public sector research, technology transfer and data sovereignty.

15. In the light of their discussions, the members of the Expert Group concluded that efforts in capacity-building and development, access to and transfer of technology and knowledge-sharing on synthetic biology, in line with the thematic action plan in the context of synthetic biology should be accelerated to address, in particular, development, assessment, governance, regulation and unequal participation in the field of synthetic biology.

16. According to the current draft of the thematic action plan, it is suggested that for effective implementation, needs and priorities should be assessed in relation to capacity-building and development, access to and transfer of technology and knowledge-sharing. These activities should be prioritized based on national and organizational circumstances in line with outcome area 1, output 1.1 of the thematic action plan.

17. The report of the Expert Group on its meeting is contained in document [CBD/SYNBIO/AHTEG/2026/1/3](#).

III. Recommendation

18. Pursuant to decision [16/21](#), the draft thematic action plan is to be considered by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice at its twenty-eighth meeting, while the implementation aspects of the plan are to be considered by the Subsidiary Body on Implementation at the present meeting. The resulting draft recommendations of both subsidiary bodies will be consolidated by the Secretariat in the compilation of draft decisions to be submitted at the seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

19. The Subsidiary Body on Implementation may wish to adopt a recommendation along the following lines:

The Subsidiary Body on Implementation

1. Notes the review of the draft thematic action plan to support capacity-building and development, access to and transfer of technology and knowledge-sharing in the context of synthetic biology for the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity¹³ and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework¹⁴ conducted by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice at its twenty-eighth meeting;¹⁵

¹³ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1760, No. 30619.

¹⁴ Decision [15/4](#), annex.

¹⁵ See recommendation 28/-- of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice.

2. *Recommends* that, at its seventeenth meeting, the Conference of the Parties adopt elements of a decision¹⁶ along the following lines:

The Conference of the Parties,

Recalling its decisions [15/8](#) of 19 December 2022 and [16/21](#) of 1 November 2024,

1. *Invites* Parties, other Governments, indigenous peoples and local communities, women and youth organizations and other relevant stakeholders to use, on a voluntary basis and in line with their identified needs and priorities, the thematic action plan to support capacity-building and development, access to and transfer of technology and knowledge-sharing in the context of synthetic biology for the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity¹⁷ and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework;^{18,19}

2. *Invites* Parties to the respective Protocols to use the thematic action plan in complement to the capacity-building action plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety^{20,21} and the capacity-building and development action plan for the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization;^{22,23}

3. *Invites* Parties to consider the actions contained in the thematic action plan in the development and implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans;

4. *Encourages* Parties to share their needs and priorities with regard to the implementation of the thematic action plan with the regional and subregional support centres of the technical and scientific cooperation mechanism;²⁴

5. *Urges* Parties, and invites other Governments and relevant organizations, to make resources available to support the implementation of the thematic action plan;

6. *Invites* Parties and other stakeholders to share information related to the implementation of the thematic action plan through the clearing-house mechanisms;

7. *Encourages* Parties, international organizations and other relevant stakeholders to facilitate scientific and technical cooperation on synthetic biology to support the implementation of the thematic action plan;

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

(a) To enhance the dedicated sections in the clearing-house mechanisms with the information referred to in paragraph 6 above, with a view to promoting the thematic action plan and facilitating knowledge-sharing in the context of synthetic biology;

(b) To support capacity-building and development and knowledge-sharing activities in order to facilitate the implementation of the thematic action plan.

¹⁶ The estimated extrabudgetary resource requirements for the activities outlined in the draft decision are shown in the annex to the present document.

¹⁷ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1760, No. 30619.

¹⁸ Decision [15/4](#), annex.

¹⁹ The thematic action plan will be included in annex I to the decision (see the annex to document CBD/SBI/7/8/Add.1 for the draft plan).

²⁰ Decision [CP-10/4](#), annex.

²¹ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2226, No. 30619.

²² Decision [NP-5/3](#), annex.

²³ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 3008, No. 30619.

²⁴ See decision [16/3](#), annex I.

Annex

Estimated extrabudgetary resource requirements

The table below has been prepared to show the estimated extrabudgetary resource requirements for the activities requested of the Secretariat, as outlined in the draft recommendation, in support of its consideration. The present annex is not part of the draft recommendation submitted for consideration by the Subsidiary Body.

Extrabudgetary resource requirements

(United States dollars)

<i>OP</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Meeting costs^a</i>	<i>Staff travel</i>	<i>Staff costs^b</i>	<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>PSC (13 per cent)</i>	<i>Total</i>
8 (b)	Support capacity-building and development and knowledge-sharing activities	63 200	10 000	84 000	157 200	20 436	177 636
	Total				157 200	20 436	177 636

Abbreviations: PSC, programme support costs; OP, operative paragraph of the draft decision.

^a Including participants' travel.

^b Consultants, partners and additional staff.