

Statement by Third World Network

Informal Session in Preparation for the Third Meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation 8–14 March 2021

Agenda item 5: Overview of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework process (Statement on the Cartagena Protocol)

Thank you, Chair.

As discussions on the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework advance, it is critical that biosafety finds its place and is adequately reflected in the GBF. This is because living modified organisms remain a serious threat to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Evidence from the past decades of LMO release and use has shown time and again that there are adverse effects, including from the use of co-technologies such as herbicides.

In fact, with new genetic engineering technologies such as genome editing, synthetic biology and engineered gene drives, the threats are increasing. There is urgent need for robust international governance and oversight of these new technologies, which need to be translated to national implementation that is unreservedly based on the precautionary principle.

The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety remains the sole international legally binding agreement that specifically addresses LMOs. We welcome the Implementation Plan and Capacity Building Action Plan of the Protocol (2021-2030), which are the outcomes of an in-depth consultative process. We call on Parties to adopt and implement the Plans with urgency.

Implementation of the Cartagena Protocol must be firmly anchored in the post-2020 GBF. This means that there must be clear links made between the GBF, including its monitoring framework, and the Implementation Plan and Capacity-Building Action Plan of the Cartagena Protocol.

Target 16 of the updated zero draft of the post-2020 GBF needs to be strengthened by incorporating and operationalizing the following principles, which are reflected in the Protocol itself and in the Implementation Plan:

First, the precautionary principle that underpins both the CBD and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, to avoid or minimize adverse effects on biodiversity, taking also into account risks to human health;

Second, the principle of prior informed consent, in relation to Parties giving their advance informed agreement according to procedures under the Protocol, and that of the free, prior and informed consent of potentially affected indigenous peoples and local communities;

Third, the need to consider the socioeconomic, cultural and ethical impacts of biotechnology, including of LMOs, genome editing, synthetic biology and engineered gene drives;

Fourth, the right of citizens, particularly of IPLCs, small holder farmers, women and youth, to fully, meaningfully and effectively participate in decision-making on LMOs and new genetic technologies; and

Finally, the urgent need for liability and redress arrangements, in the case of damage or imminent threat of damage to biodiversity, taking also into account risks to human health.

Thank you.