



Convention on Biological Diversity

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Retreat of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity

Panama City, 31 October and 1 November 2025

MINUTES OF THE BUREAU RETREAT HELD ON THE MARGINS OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODY ON ARTICLE 8(J) AND OTHER PROVISIONS OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY RELATED TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN PANAMA CITY

1. The Bureau of the Conference of the Parties held an in-person retreat on 31 October and 1 November 2025, following the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j) and Other Provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity related to Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (SB8j-1). The Bureau retreat took place at the Atlapa Convention Centre in Panama City.

2. The main purpose of the retreat was for the Bureau to discuss overall preparations for the 2026 UN Biodiversity Conference (COP 17/ CP COP-MOP 12/ NP COP-MOP 6) that will take place in Yerevan, as well as engage in a broad discussion of the desired outcomes for the Conference. The meeting also provided an update on preparations for the sixth and seventh meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI-6) and on the ongoing Functional Review of the Secretariat.

3. The following members of the Bureau attended the retreat:

COP 16 and COP-MOP 11 Presidency Representative: Ms. Daniela Durán González (Colombia);

COP-MOP 5 President: Ms. Nneka Nicholas (Antigua and Barbuda);

Africa: Ms. Joséphine Thérèse B. Eloundou (Cameroon); Mr. Jonas Anthé (Togo);

Asia and the Pacific: Mr. Belal Qtishat (Jordan); Mr. Midhath Rasheed (Maldives);

Eastern European States: Ms. Adla Kahrić (Bosnia and Herzegovina);

Latin America and the Caribbean: Ms. Corina Sarli (Argentina); Mr. Jeremiah Edmund (Saint Lucia, substitute for Jamaica for matters related to the Nagoya Protocol);

Western Europe and Others: Mr. Eric Schauls (Luxembourg), Mr. Gaute Hanssen (Norway);

Ex-officio: Ms. Clarissa Nina (Brazil), Chair of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation; Mr. Jean Bruno Mikissa (Gabon), Chair of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice;

Observers: Mr. Mher Margaryan, Mr. Davit Knyazyan and Mr. Davit Manukyan (Representatives from Armenia as COP 17, CP COP-MOP 12 and NP COP-MOP 6 hosts); Mr. Neville Ash (United Nations Environment Programme);

4. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was represented by Ms. Astrid Schomaker, Executive Secretary, Ms. Jihyun Lee, Deputy Executive Secretary; Mr. Asad Naqvi, Director of the Implementation Support Division; Ms. Sakhile Silitshena, Director of the Science, Society and Sustainable Futures Division; Ms. Wadzanayi Mandivenyi, Head, Biosafety Unit; Mr. Taukondjo Shikongo, Head ABS Unit; Mr. Olivier Rukundo, Head of the Peoples and Biodiversity Unit; Ms. Inonge Mweene, Senior Legal Officer for the Convention; Ms. Elisabeth Bernhardt, Head of Communications and Awareness; Ms. Maria Morgado, Special Assistant to the Executive Secretary; Mr. Ray Goh, Information Systems Officer; Ms. Gisela Talamas, Programme Assistant; and Ms. Imane Sednoui, Senior Staff Assistant.

ITEM 1. Opening of the Meeting

5. The retreat was opened at 10:00am local time by Ms. Daniela Durán González, who chaired the meeting on behalf of Her Excellency, Ms. Irene Vélez, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development of Colombia and COP 16 President on the first day, while Ms. Nneka Nicholas (Antigua and Barbuda), COP-MOP 5 President for the Nagoya Protocol chaired the second day of the retreat. The Chair welcomed the Bureau members and emphasized the strategic nature of the meeting in shaping the preparations for COP17 next year. She encouraged the Bureau to focus on strategic direction, priorities and a shared vision, and reiterated Colombia's willingness to support Armenia by sharing their experience as hosts.

6. The Executive Secretary also provided opening remarks and welcomed the Bureau. She thanked the participants for their leadership and guidance during the SB8j-1 meeting and highlighted the importance of consensus-building during negotiations. The Executive Secretary also reported back on a recent mission to Yerevan and commended the incoming host's progress in preparations. She also raised concerns about the lack of contributions toward the BZ Trust Fund to support participation of representatives from developing countries in meetings of the Convention, which had a direct impact on the recent negotiations. The Executive Secretary invited the Bureau to share ideas on how to address these funding gaps for the upcoming meetings. She also invited the Bureau to reflect on how best to improve the efficiency of meetings, including using innovative practices such as the early submission of statements for some items, which was piloted during the twenty-seventh meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-27).

ITEM 2. Adoption of the Agenda

7. The Chair introduced the provisional agenda and after a brief exchange with Bureau members, three adjustments to the agenda were made including: a) adding a briefing from the SBSTTA Chair under item 3; b) rescheduling the Functional Review update to the end of the first day; and c) including a discussion related to improving the effectiveness of processes of the Convention under item 5 and an update on the Help Desks experience during the recent meetings under "Other Matters". The agenda was adopted with those changes.

ITEM 3. Briefing on key outcomes of the twenty-seventh meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-27) and the first meeting on the Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j) and Other Provisions of the Convention Related to Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (SB8J-1)

8. The Chair of SBSTTA, Mr. Jean Bruno Mikissa (Gabon), provided a brief overview of the proceedings and outcomes that took place during SBSTTA-27. He noted that a key procedural innovation was the piloting of early submission of statements under agenda items 9 and 10, which significantly improved the efficiency of preparing conference room papers and expedited plenary consideration. The SBSTTA Chair highlighted that due to the limitation of small delegations, efforts were made to limit parallel contact groups. He noted that while SBSTTA-27 laid a strong foundation for the deliberations at COP 17, several issues remained in brackets.

9. The Chair, as Co-chair of SB8J-1, provided a report back to the Bureau on the main outcomes of SB8J-1. She noted that the meeting advanced deliberations on the governance of the Subsidiary Body, including on the modus operandi and mechanisms to ensure the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities, amongst other fruitful discussions. Nevertheless, divergent views remain and would need to be solved at COP 17.

10. The Bureau thanked both the SBSTTA Chair and the SB8J Co-chair for their overviews of each meeting. They highlighted the challenges faced by smaller delegations, made suggestions to improve the in-depth dialogues in future SB8j meetings to make them more interactive and inclusive. Some concerns were raised regarding substantive and procedural aspects of the meetings, noting inefficient exchanges in plenary as well as in contact group meetings. The Bureau was invited to consider ways to ensure fairness, inclusivity and efficiency in the proceedings.

11. In response to the discussion, the Secretariat proposed that webinars could be organised to provide procedural training to Parties and suggested the Bureau could consider applying a code of conduct for efficient proceedings of the meetings. The Bureau then requested the Secretariat to provide written guidance on how to improve and structure discussions during the meetings. It was noted that any such guidance will have to be within the rules of procedure of the Convention. SBI 6 may be used as a pilot for such guidelines.

ITEM 4. Updates on the preparation of the sixth and seventh meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI)

12. The Chair invited Ms. Clarissa Nina, Chair of SBI to preside the discussion under this item. The SBI Chair began by providing an update on the preparations for both SBI-6 and SBI-7 that will take place next year in February and August, respectively. She noted the Bureau had already approved the agenda for SBI-6 and the Secretariat was ready to issue the notification for registration and logistical arrangements. The SBI Chair emphasized that the lack of voluntary funding to support the activities of the Secretariat requested by the Conference of the Parties, was a major concern and affected the timely preparation of pre-session documents. She also informed the Bureau that a workshop on Resource Mobilization may be taking place from 10 to 13 February in Rome, just ahead of the start of SBI-6, pending confirmation on funding arrangements. The SBI Chair indicated that the list of potential co-chairs for contact groups would be made available soon for the Bureau's consideration.

13. Regarding the efficiency of the meetings, the SBI Chair proposed to continue the pilot modality of early submission of statements, building on experience and lessons learned from SBSTTA-27. She also proposed introducing time limitations for interventions as per rule 31 of the Convention's rules of procedure, stressing the importance of managing fairness among delegates and allowing observers to contribute meaningfully. An overview of the possible items that may require discussion in contact groups

was provided, exploring the possibility that some contact group meetings may be held during the lunch hour, as no side-events would be taking place during SBI-6.

14. Regarding the annotated agenda of SBI-7, some members of the Bureau noted that the proposed organization of work should reflect actual practices to assist Parties prepare their delegations, such as evening sessions, while noting that the details of the organization of work need to be updated later. Further reflections were shared on the pilot modalities for early submission of statements, which had positive feedback in the survey from the SBSTTA-27 experience. Mindful that the application of the pilot modalities is informal and on voluntary basis, Bureau members expressed support in continuing the pilot modality for SBI-6 and received from the Secretariat the document on pilot modality that was used for SBSTTA-27 in the form of notification [2025-120](#), for their reference.

ITEM 5. Preparations for the 2026 UN Biodiversity Conference (COP 17/ CP-MOP 12 /NP-MOP 6)

Presentation and overview of the preparations for the 2026 UN Biodiversity Conference by the Government of Armenia

15. Under this first sub-agenda item, representatives of the Government of Armenia, as hosts of COP 17, CP COP-MOP 12 and NP COP-MOP 6, provided a brief presentation to the Bureau on the progress in preparation for COP 17 next year. They provided information on the renovation of the conference center, a status update on the hotel accommodation, simplified visa processes, expanding flight routes and preparations for a High-Level Segment and a Leader's Summit. Armenia's engagement in promoting COP and the biodiversity agenda in several international events, was also highlighted.

16. The Bureau thanked the incoming hosts for their commitment and progress in preparations towards COP17.

Looking ahead to COP 17 and beyond (Overall vision)

17. The Bureau then engaged in a strategic discussion to identify and reflect on the overarching priorities for the 2026 UN Biodiversity Conference, in particular the global review process. The Chair invited Mr. Gaute Hanssen (Norway) and Ms. Nneka Nicholas (Antigua and Barbuda) to facilitate the discussions under this sub-item.

18. The Bureau was invited to address priorities, risks and opportunities for COP 17. Among the important topics identified were the global review, resource mobilisation and the financial mechanism, article 8j issues, biodiversity and climate change, and digital sequence information (DSI). Organisational matters such as the High-Level Segment and how to engage ministers were also addressed. Regarding ministerial involvement, the Bureau highlighted the importance of being transparent through a consultative process and taking into consideration language barriers, focusing on the strategic issues of which consensus-building can be facilitated through the involvement of ministers.

19. Bureau members noted it was important to lower the risk for COP 17 as much as possible across the different issues and this was also underlined by the COP 17 hosts. In this vein the Bureau, inter alia, discussed various issues, including possible intersessional work on article 8j issues, the importance of identifying capable co-chairs for the contact groups, and effective time management during the plenary and contact group meetings to avoid dominance by a few delegates of the speaking opportunities and overall speaking time.

20. One of the central organisational themes was the proposed Leader's Summit where Bureau members emphasized the importance of high-level messaging and the need to inform Parties about the dates and the meeting programme well in advance to ensure sufficient attendance. They also highlighted the need for specificity and thorough preparation during SBI-6 and SBI-7 to avoid sending unfinished discussions to COP 17 and avoid any need for resumed sessions. The global review of collective progress in the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) emerged as a

critical priority and concerns revolved around the potential impact of limited submissions of national reports for an effective review process before the set deadline in February 2026. However, it was also reflected that the global review process is the first of its kind under the Convention and also an opportunity to trigger biodiversity action.

21. Regarding stakeholder engagement and political messaging, the Bureau discussed strategies to encourage submissions of national biodiversity strategies and action plans, leveraging subregional cooperation. At the request of the Bureau, the Secretariat informed the meeting that 98 Parties had submitted NBSAPs valid through 2030, 57 Parties had updated their NBSAP since COP 15, and 142 Parties had submitted national targets, with the expectation that many more would submit by the deadline.

Preliminary review of draft agendas for the meetings of COP 17, CP COP-MOP 12, and NP COP-MOP 6

22. Under this sub-item, the Chair invited the COP Secretary, Ms. Jihyun Lee, and the Secretaries of the Cartagena and Nagoya Protocol COP-MOPs, to provide an overview of the draft provisional agendas for COP17, CP COP-MOP 12 and NP COP-MOP 6. Each Secretary provided a brief explanation of the proposed structure and clustering of items (for the case of COP 17), as well as an overview of the main substantive items covered by each meeting.

23. Bureau members thanked the Secretariat for the documents and the overviews provided. After an exchange on the clustering of items and structure, the Bureau agreed to a three-week timeline for regional review and consultation and agreed to submit any comments back to the Secretariat as early as possible, but not later than 28 November 2025. Minor comments would be incorporated and recirculated in track-changes, while more complex comments would require a virtual meeting for finalization.

Approaches for developing the organization of work of the meetings

24. The Executive Secretary, outlining the financial difficulties affecting many Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), proposed a few ideas to address these issues including reducing the frequency of COPs after 2030, exploring alternative sources of funding. She emphasized the need to prioritize and streamline operations and provided additional examples and ideas that are implemented in other fora. The importance of exploring efficiencies both within the Convention and across other MEAs was emphasized.

25. The COP Secretary also provided an overview of various elements, in particular in relation to the decision 16/25, to consider in developing the organization of work for COP 17, CP-MOP 12 and NP-MOP 6, including:

- Modalities of early submission of statements (para 3 of decision 16/25)
- Identification of potential contact group co-chairs well in advance to the meetings (para 8)
- Providing on-line and in-person trainings for the potential co-chairs (para 9):
- Preparation for the Scenario Note, with updated details of the organization of the work for the meetings (para 14)
- Preparation for costing of requests to ES, as part of the draft decisions;
- Developing the organization of the work, taking into account fully the interconnectedness between COP and COP-MOPs agenda items, while allocating distinct work days/sessions for Protocol items in the early stage of the meeting to facilitate efficient participation of delegates to Protocols.

26. The Secretariat also briefed on the preparation for the document on the multi-year programme of work of the Conference of the Parties (MYPOW), in consultation with the Bureau.

27. Members of the Bureau responded with a range of suggestions and ideas, some also highlighting the UN@80 process and overall financial constraints. One idea might be to look at what potential measures to be undertaken in the long run to sustain the Convention with a commissioned study as a starting point. In a short-term perspective the early identification of co-chairs, developing a workplan

of the Bureau to track implementation, webinars on the rules of procedures for delegates, training of potential contact group co-chairs, were among the ideas. The Bureau generally supported the early submission of statements, building on the experience from SBSTTA-27, but stressed the need for regional coordination and clear modalities to avoid any constraints to participation. Ideas were shared on limiting the number and length of decisions, in particular preambular paragraphs, and to streamline agendas organically. It was also highlighted that the scope of COP 17 was unprecedented as it would be informed by at least five different meetings of its Subsidiary Bodies. Some members of Bureau highlighted the need to look for innovative and bold approaches in steering the process of streamlining the agendas in order to make COP 17 a success. Regarding the funding situation for participation in the meetings, the Bureau also discussed the idea of funding at least one delegate from developing countries from the core budget.

28. In order to organize the work of the Bureau for efficiently managing various intersessional meetings and associated processes, the COP Secretary presented a backward planning for the work of the Bureau, as contained in the annex to this document. She also informed the Bureau that a status document on negotiations would be prepared once all the meetings of subsidiary bodies will have concluded in August 2026, which will inform the Bureau in finalizing the details of the organization of the work for COP 17, CP COP-MOP 12 and NP COP-MOP 6, as part of the Scenario Note. The Bureau members also noted the Secretariat's continuous efforts for timely posting of working documents as well as reducing the overall length of meeting documents, and requested that the actions agreed by the Bureau meeting should be included in the backwards planning in order to follow-up on them, namely for the actions related to application of modalities of early submissions of statements, drafting the draft decisions in concise manner, and preparation of written guidance on managing the plenary and contact group meetings in efficient and disciplined manners, including the code of conducts for the delegates.

29. Regarding the provision of information to indicate cost implications of draft recommendations requesting the work of the Secretariat, the Bureau suggested different formats that could be applied in providing such information, which can start from the working documents of SBI-6.

ITEM 6. Update on the Functional Review

30. Under this agenda item, the lead external consultant from UNDP MCT, Mr. Eugene Pak, made a brief presentation to the Bureau on the progress of the Functional Review that was being undertaken for the Secretariat. He outlined that the review was entering its final phase, with data synthesis and recommendation drafting underway. After a brief description of the activities completed and the methodologies employed, the consultant referenced the survey that was carried out for the Bureau members and provided an overview of the responses. He noted that a priority for the review process included enhancing the Secretariat's business processes and its structure to better support the implementation of the KMGBF. The consultant provided some insights into the results of the functional review, including misalignment between workload and resources, strong staff commitment and institutional expertise, structural and functional gaps, risks related to conference management process, among other issues.

31. The Bureau thanked the Secretariat and the consultant for the update and engaged in a brief discussion. Some Bureau members emphasized the importance of linking the functional review with the strategic review of the programmes of work. While raising concerns about overburdening the Secretariat, it was also mentioned that there was a need for accurate information on financial implications of mandates and a call for prioritization of core functions was made. A request was also made to produce data on the Secretariat's reliance on external consultants to assess capacity gaps.

ITEM 7. Other Matters

32. Under this agenda item, the Secretariat provided an update on the development of its on-line calendar of activities and actions, including a demonstration of its features. The Secretariat, offering a comprehensive overview of the prototype on-line calendar, noted that the helpdesk component of the

calendar of activities and actions played a crucial role that would support users as they navigated the platform.

33. The Secretariat then provided an update on the Help Desk to assist Parties in the preparation for submissions regarding the funding needs assessment for GEF-9 replenishment cycle, indicating that submissions from seven countries had been received, six submissions were pending capital approval, support had been provided to 36 countries and a regional organization, including a diverse range of Parties. The Secretariat then shared further details on the Help Desk on national reporting.

34. After thanking the Secretariat for the updates, the Bureau reflected on the implementation of the Help Desks and noted their potential to enhance participation in response to calls for submissions, as low submission rates were observed due to short deadlines or overlapping meetings. It was proposed that a strategy to improve the help desks and submission process be considered and that deadlines should overall be longer and not fall during or immediately before a major meeting to allow adequate coordination.

35. The Bureau members welcomed that Luxembourg would participate in the process of voluntary peer review of the national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

ITEM 8. Closing of the Meeting

36. The Chair thanked the Bureau members and the Secretariat for the rich discussions and contributions and indicated that the next in-person meeting of the Bureau would be held on 15 February 2026 in Rome, ahead of SBI-6 and that a virtual meeting could be convened in December or January to review preparations and address pending matters. The COP 16 Chair closed the meeting on 31 October at 5:30 p.m., and the Nagoya Protocol COP-MOP 5 President closed the meeting on 1 November at 12:30 p.m.

Annex. Backward plan for the activities of the COP Bureau towards COP 17, CP-MOP 12 and NP-MOP 6

Note: The below is as presented during the meeting, and some dates are indicative and subject to change

COP 17, CP-MOP 12, NP-MOP 6: 19 - 30 October 2026 (Yerevan)		
<i>Actions</i>	<i>Type/Actors</i>	<i>Dates</i>
COP Bureau In-Person Meeting at COP 17/MOP 12&6 In-Session	Bureau Meeting	18 October, 20-30 October 2026
In-person Training of Potential CG Co-Chairs (TBC)	Secretariat	17 October 2026
COP Bureau On-line Meeting to check final preparation for COP 17/MOP 12&6	Bureau Meeting	18 September 2026
Secretariat briefings to Potential CG Co-Chairs for SBI 6	Secretariat	September 2026
COP 17/MOP 12 & 6 Doc Posting Deadline	Document Deadline	7 September 2026
Finalization of Scenario Doc for COP 17/MOP 12&6 by COP Bureau	Bureau Activities	21 August 2026
Identification of Potential CG Co-Chairs for COP 17/MOP 12&6 by COP Bureau	Bureau Activities	21 August 2026
Finalization and posting of meeting agenda	Bureau/ Secretariat	December 2025

SBI-7: 4-12 August 2026 (Nairobi)		
<i>Actions</i>	<i>Type/Actors</i>	<i>Dates</i>
COP Bureau In-Person Meeting at SBI-7 In-Session	Bureau Meeting	3, 5-12 August 2026
In-person Training of Potential CG Co-Chairs (TBC)	Secretariat	2 August 2026
COP Bureau On-line Meeting to check final preparation for SBI 7	Bureau Meeting	9 July 2026
SBI 7 Doc Posting Deadline	Document Deadline	7 July 2026
Secretariat briefings to Potential CG Co-Chairs for SBI-6	Secretariat	July 2026
Finalization of Scenario Doc for SBI-7 by COP Bureau	Bureau Activities	30 June 2026
Identification of Potential CG Co-Chairs for SBI-7 by COP Bureau	Bureau Activities	30 June 2026
Posting Meeting Agenda	Secretariat	November 2025

SBI-6: 16-19 February 2026 (Rome)		
<i>Actions</i>	<i>Type/Actors</i>	<i>Dates</i>
COP Bureau In-Person Meeting at SBI-6 In-Session	Bureau Meeting	15 February, 17-19 February 2026
COP Bureau On-line Meeting to check final preparation for SBI 6	Bureau Meeting	15 January 2026
SBI6 Doc Posting Deadline	Document Deadline	5 January 2026

Secretariat briefings to Potential CG Co-Chairs for SBI-6	Secretariat	January 2026
Finalization of Scenario Doc for SBI-6 by COP Bureau	Bureau Activities	15 December 2025
Identification of Potential CG Co-Chairs for SBI-6 by COP Bureau	Bureau Activities	15 December 2025
