



Ref.: SCBD/SPS/DC/DA/MW/86375

16 March 2017

NOTIFICATION

Submission of information on synthetic biology and nomination of experts to participate in the Open-ended Online Forum on Synthetic Biology

Dear Madam/Sir,

In decision XIII/17, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity commended the work of the online forum and the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Synthetic Biology (AHTEG), and welcomed the conclusions and recommendations of the report of the AHTEG as a basis for further discussion.

The Conference of the Parties decided to extend the mandate of the AHTEG in accordance with the terms of reference annexed to the decision and also to contribute to the completion of the assessment as requested in paragraph 2 of decision XII/24.

The Conference of the Parties also decided to extend the open-ended online forum to support the work of the AHTEG, and invited Parties, other Governments, indigenous peoples and local communities and relevant organizations to continue nominating experts to take part in the open-ended online forum.

Further in the same decision, the Conference of the Parties encouraged Parties and invited other Governments and relevant organizations, in the context of the three objectives of the Convention and taking into account, if appropriate and in accordance with domestic legislation or national circumstances, socio-economic, cultural and ethical considerations:

- (a) To conduct research on the benefits and adverse effects of organisms, components and products of synthetic biology on biodiversity, with a view to filling knowledge gaps and identifying how those effects relate to the objectives of the Convention and its Protocols;
- (b) To promote and enable public and multi-stakeholder dialogues and awareness-raising activities on the potential benefits and potential adverse effects of organisms, components and products of synthetic biology on biodiversity, involving all relevant stakeholders and with the full and effective engagement of indigenous peoples and local communities; and
- (c) To cooperate in the development of guidance and capacity-building activities with a view to assessing the potential benefits and potential adverse effects of organisms, components and products of synthetic biology and, if necessary, updating and adapting current methodologies for risk assessment of living modified organisms to organisms resulting from synthetic biology, as appropriate.

To: CBD National Focal Points; relevant organizations; and indigenous peoples and local communities

cc: SBSTTA National Focal Points, Cartagena Protocol National Focal Points, Nagoya Protocol Focal Points

Furthermore, the Conference of the Parties invited Parties, other Governments, relevant organizations and indigenous peoples and local communities to submit to the Executive Secretary information and supporting documentation on:

- (a) Research, cooperation and activities noted in the sub-paragraphs (a) through (c) above;
- (b) Evidence of benefits and adverse effects of synthetic biology vis-à-vis the three objectives of the Convention;
- (c) Experiences in conducting risk assessments of organisms, components and products of synthetic biology, including any challenges encountered, lessons learned and implications for risk assessment frameworks;
- (d) Examples of risk management and other measures that have been put in place to avoid or minimize the potential adverse effects of organisms, components and products of synthetic biology, including experiences of safe use and best practices for the safe handling of organisms developed through synthetic biology;
- (e) Regulations, policies and guidelines in place or under development which are directly relevant to synthetic biology; and
- (f) Knowledge, experience and perspectives of indigenous peoples and local communities in the context of living in harmony with nature for comparison and better understanding of the potential benefits and adverse effects of synthetic biology.

To implement the various elements of the decision in a systematic manner, the Secretariat is establishing a continuous process comprising: (i) submission of information on synthetic biology; (ii) discussions through the open-ended online forum (tentatively to be held from July to September 2017); (iii) one face-to-face meeting of the AHTEG (tentatively to be held in December 2017); and (iv) peer-review of the outcomes of the AHTEG. The outcomes of this process will be submitted for peer review and subsequent consideration by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) at its twenty-second meeting to be held 2 to 7 July 2018.

Accordingly, I am pleased to invite Parties, other Governments, relevant organizations and indigenous people and local communities to:

(a) Submit to the Secretariat (secretariat@cbd.int) information and supporting documentation on the six topics referred to above as soon as possible, but no later than **16 June 2017**. The information submitted will be made available for consideration by the online forum and the AHTEG on Synthetic Biology; and

(b) To nominate experts to participate in the Open-ended Online Forum on Synthetic Biology. CBD National Focal Points or Heads of organizations, as appropriate, are kindly requested to submit nominations for experts via e-mail to synbio@cbd.int clearly indicating the names and emails of each nominee. Nominees will be subsequently contacted by the Secretariat to facilitate their registration in the Open-ended Online Forum by completing an online form outlining their experience in the field of synthetic biology. The Online Forum is open to all interested participants but they must be registered in order to contribute to the online discussions. The outcomes of the online discussions will serve as a basis for the deliberations by the AHTEG on Synthetic Biology. Nominations of experts to the Open-ended Online Forum on Synthetic Biology will be accepted on an ongoing basis.

Please accept, Madam/Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

David Cooper
Deputy Executive Secretary
Officer-in-Charge