

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

21 October–1 November 2024 - Cali, Colombia

Item 24: Synthetic Biology

Thank you, Chair

I am speaking on behalf of the CBD Women's Caucus.

In the context of synthetic biology, the precautionary approach (Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration), articulated in preambular paragraph 9 of the CBD, should guide our actions. This principle gives priority to the protection of vulnerable groups, including the poor, women, children and youth. It is crucial to protect those who do not benefit from the shareholder-driven benefits of synthetic biology and lack the financial resources to protect themselves from potential harm.

It is imperative that the Conference of the Parties task the mAHTEG to further explore crucial topics such as artificial intelligence, synthetic biology, self-propagating vaccines and gene drives, emphasizing its multidisciplinary approach, and laying a foundation for effective monitoring of their impacts on biodiversity and those who depend on biodiversity. However, this task must be carried out with the full and effective participation of women in horizon scanning, monitoring and technology assessment, which will require specific capacity building to ensure that biodiversity and human health are preserved for all, especially those most vulnerable.

Decisions about technologies that affect the lives of millions should not be made without including those who will be most impacted. By addressing the gender gap in science and technology, we not only promote equity, but also strengthen our collective capacities to meet the challenges of the future.



In this regard, we suggest the modifications to the text *CBD/COP/16/2/Rev.1 item 24*

- Retain preambular paragraph 2 that recalls the decisions XII/24, XIII/17, 14/19 and 15/31,
- In the same paragraph, in line 2, after “December 2022,” to add “**especially the apply the precautionary principle to synthetic biology**”.
- Lift the brackets around paragraphs 11 to 19 of section B and the annex.
- In operative paragraph 18, subparagraph (e) after “participation” to add “**effective**”.
- **In the Annex:**
 - Lift the brackets to retain “multidisciplinary” in the title and paragraph 3, for the AHTEG
 - Lift the brackets around paragraph 3.c.i and 3.c.iii.

Chair,

I would like to remind Parties of preambular paragraph 13 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which highlights the crucial role of women in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Their full and effective participation in policy creation and implementation is essential. The expansion of the multidisciplinary AHTEG and the horizon scanning, monitoring and evaluation processes established at COP15 are vital tools to prevent women from being omitted, which is exacerbated by the lack of adequate technical and technological capacities.

We would like to ask Parties for support.

Thank you.

For more information:

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The CBD Women’s Caucus (CBD WC) serves as the recognized women’s constituency within the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It stands as a self-organised global platform, supporting women and girls worldwide to advocate for their rights within biodiversity-related decision-making processes across all levels.

To find out more about the CBD WC visit <https://cbd womenscaucus.org>