

Gender and Biodiversity Focal Points Network

Terms of Reference

Adopted - September 2025

1) Background & Rationale

Gender equality is a recognized cross-cutting priority under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), reaffirmed through the Gender Plan of Action (2022–2030) and Target 23 of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF). While important normative advances have been achieved, implementation across Parties remains uneven. Many national Gender & Biodiversity Focal Points continue to face structural constraints, including limited resources, fragmented institutional coordination, and restricted opportunities for peer exchange and collective learning.

In response to these challenges, and in the absence of a formal CBD-mandated coordination mechanism for Gender & Biodiversity Focal Points, an informal Network has emerged as a practical and responsive space for connection, mutual support, and strategic exchange. During 2024, a series of informal calls convened Gender & Biodiversity Focal Points alongside the CBD Women’s Caucus to share information, reflect on negotiation dynamics, and coordinate advocacy approaches in the lead-up to CBD intersessionals and COP16. These exchanges contributed to strengthened visibility of gender considerations and positive outcomes in Cali, Colombia, demonstrating the value of direct, trust-based communication among like-minded actors.

Following COP16, participants expressed strong interest in sustaining this space as an ongoing informal channel through which Gender & Biodiversity Focal Points can organize themselves, exchange experiences, and collaborate more closely with the CBD Women’s Caucus. The Network is not a negotiating body, nor does it replace formal CBD processes or official national positions. Rather, it provides a confidential and non-hierarchical environment for Focal Points and partners to strategize, share challenges and good practices, maintain attention on gender equality commitments, and support one another in advancing gender-responsive biodiversity action within their respective mandates.

The Gender Plan of Action (2022–2030) serves as the Network’s primary guiding framework, anchoring its discussions, priorities, and collective reflections in existing CBD decisions and mandates. Through regular exchanges aligned with key moments in the CBD calendar, the Network aims to support coherence in implementation, contribute to collective learning, and help sustain political and technical momentum on gender equality across the Convention.

2) Purpose

The Network aims to provide a dedicated and sustained space for Gender and Biodiversity Focal Points to exchange information, experiences, and strategies; enable peer-to-peer support and solidarity; and strengthen capacities for the effective implementation of gender-responsive biodiversity policies.

To achieve this purpose, the Network will, among others:

- Identify shared capacity-building needs and mobilize access to resources, while promoting peer-to-peer support, solidarity, and exchange of good practices across regions.
- Exchange information, experiences, and strategies related to negotiation developments, and intersessional opportunities to strengthen collective influence in policy processes.
- Coordinate joint advocacy to integrate gender equality across CBD processes, subsidiary bodies, and national-level implementation.
- Amplify efforts to monitor and advance implementation of Target 23 and the Gender Plan of Action.
- Coordinate with the CBD secretariat to enable gender focal points to work effectively in the CBD process and to implement key activities under the Gender Plan of Action.

3) Membership & Participation

The Network is open to all officially designated CBD Gender & Biodiversity Focal Points.

The CBD Women's Caucus will play a facilitation and documentation role, aiming to support GB Focal Points' collective priorities and coordination. The Caucus does not replace or speak for focal points but helps enable shared dialogue and action.

Other actors, such as the CBD Secretariat, civil society organizations, and gender experts may be invited to specific meetings or discussions when relevant, based on collective agreement.

4) Principles

Members of the Network commit to:

- Solidarity & mutual respect, recognizing diverse realities and contexts.
- Confidentiality & trust, ensuring sensitive information shared within the Network is not disclosed externally without consent.
- Intersectionality, acknowledging multiple, overlapping forms of discrimination and striving to include the most marginalized.

- Inclusivity & accessibility, including efforts to address language barriers and other accessibility needs.
- Interculturality, recognising and valuing diverse knowledge systems, worldviews, and cultural identities.

5) Proposed Modalities

Frequency: Meetings will be held every three months, with the option of additional sessions.

Meeting times: Each meeting will normally be offered in two time slots on the same day, scheduled to accommodate different time zones (for example, one in the morning UK time and one later in the day). This approach aims to enable participation across regions while allowing flexibility as needed.

Agenda & Preparation: Agendas will be co-developed by the Gender and Biodiversity Focal Points, informed by inputs from the CBD Women's Caucus, and aligned with an annually agreed calendar. Agendas and relevant documentation will be shared ahead of each meeting to enable informed participation.

Facilitation: The CBD Women's Caucus will facilitate the Network processes. The CBD Secretariat (SCBD) and other actors would be invited when relevant to agenda items or collective actions proposed.

Language: The ideal for the Network is to ensure professional, simultaneous interpretation in all relevant languages spoken by GB Focal Points, enabling everyone to participate fully and express themselves comfortably.

Confidentiality: To encourage honest and open exchanges, meetings will follow the Chatham House Rule, meaning participants are free to use the information discussed but should not attribute comments to specific individuals. Detailed minutes will capture discussions and proposals while maintaining speakers' anonymity.

6) Meeting Documentation & Communication

Minutes will be compiled by the CBD Women's Caucus after each call, summarizing discussions, collective views, agreed action points, and next steps, without attributing individual comments.

A dedicated shared Google Drive unit will serve as a central archive where all minutes, concept notes, and related documents will be stored and accessible to Network members.

Minutes and documents will be made available only in English, given current capacity constraints. We invite members to use online translation tools to access these materials in their preferred languages.

To facilitate efficient communication, there will be a dedicated mailing list, updated according to the official list of GB Focal Points published on the CBD website. This will allow all members to receive Network updates and share information directly with their peers, without needing to email each address individually.

7) Feedback & Evaluation

The Network will conduct an annual evaluation (e.g., short survey or collective discussion) to assess its relevance, inclusivity, and impact, and to adapt modalities as needed based on members' feedback.

For more information reach out:
coordination@cbd womenscaucus.org