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Let's be cautious. The present strategic plan and its 20 Aichi targets is comprehensive and addresses all relevant issues. While we need more specific guidance on how to implement and measure them, a new set of targets may be weaker, not comparable and cause long delays. We would urge parties to build any new framework on the existing Aichi targets that would, inter alia, allow to continually measure progress towards them.

Let's act. We have a little more than 1000 days to meet the Aichi targets. So rather than engaging in endless debates on the future strategic plan, we would strongly urge parties to use the Pyeongchang roadmap and put their energy in the implementation of the present CBD Strategic plan and to explicitly include Indigenous peoples and local communities in the process of developing the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and related analytical work.

Wildlife management & bush meat

Recognition of Indigenous peoples' and local communities' rights and subsistence needs and customary practices, specially those of women, is critical to address unsustainable wildlife consumption.

It is also necessary to address drivers and contributing factors such as middle class and tourist demand for wild meat, including through demand-reduction strategies, dismantling wildlife trade syndicates, and promoting balanced and (primarily) plant-based diets as alternatives to meat.

Biodiversity and Human health

We encourage CBD Parties to include representatives from Indigenous peoples and local communities in the

Interagency Liaison Group on Biodiversity and Health, identified through their own selection process, and gender experts.

To address unsustainable livestock production, we urge Parties to promote a shift to healthy and balanced, primarily plant-based diets, and to eliminate or redirect perverse incentives for unsustainable agriculture, including livestock production as a significant opportunity for biodiversity and for the health of consumers as well as producers.

Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming biodiversity should ensure that development of sectors happens within planetary boundaries as there are clear limits we cannot surpass. However, the draft decision on mainstreaming seems to do the opposite: it starts by outlining the growth needs of these sectors, and then looks at how we can apply some half-hearted measures so that biodiversity becomes a marginal concern rather than a central issue.

We don't need voluntary guidelines and certification that function more as a greenwashing mechanism than as actual measures. Offsets do not prevent biodiversity degradation where it is occurring, they soon become a license to trash biodiversity, and have proven to be very ineffective and even damaging for nature and Indigenous Peoples. We need stringent regulations that place the needs of biodiversity above the ever-growing greed of for-profit sectors.

Fifth Global Biodiversity Outlook

GBO 3 (2010) made it clear we were already breaching planetary boundaries. GBO 4 (2014) showed that progress on most Aichi targets was insufficient, while pollution, fragmentation and degradation of habitats and impacts ►

on coral reefs were continuing to worsen. More recent reports on reductions in populations of wildlife suggest that the situation is even worse than we realized.

GB05 is tasked with examining progress on the Aichi Targets which is critical for upcoming debates on 2020 onwards. In this process, we urge to include gender assessments and to be more accessible and inclusive of indigenous peoples and local communities.

AHTEG on Synthetic biology

We note with great concern that the integrity of the Open-ended Online Forum on Synthetic Biology, and consequently the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG), may have been compromised by external actors who seek

to influence the discussions on gene drives. We call on the Executive Secretary to urgently instate a process across the CBD and its subsidiary bodies that will ensure robust and consistent procedures for declaration of interest and conflict of interest. It should include full disclosure of any potential or existing conflict of interest and at least this standard should be applied immediately to the AHTEGs and online discussion forums.

Last but not least, we are deeply concerned of the imbalanced participation of different sectors which puts at risk the credibility and achievements of the CBD.

We encourage Canada as host country and other parties, to facilitate access in terms of accreditation, visa and economical support for civil society.

Open Letter to Dr. Cristiana Paşca Palmer, Executive Secretary

Addressing conflict of interest in the CBD, its Protocols and subsidiary bodies

4 December 2017

Dear Dr. Cristiana Paşca Palmer,

We are writing to alert you to matters that have recently come to light through freedom of information requests, and that require an urgent response.

We are concerned that the integrity of the Open-ended Online Forum on Synthetic Biology, and consequently the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on Synthetic Biology, may have been compromised by external actors who seek to influence the discussions on gene drives. In particular:

- A private agriculture and biotechnology PR firm called Emerging Ag recruited at least 65 people to participate in the Online Forum as independent experts, when Emerging Ag had been paid \$1.6 million for a project that included an objective of co-ordinating these participants and involved it issuing them with almost daily advice on how to influence the discussion in line with its strategy.
- There is also evidence of appointees to associated CBD processes having relevant financial interests through the institutions they represent that have not been declared in CBD forums.

This activity has the potential to prejudice outcomes of the AHTEG and undermine the spirit of Decision XIII/17 on Synthetic Biology, particularly paragraph 2 that expressly applies to some living modified organisms containing gene drives. We respectfully call on you to urgently instate a process across the CBD and its subsidiary bodies that will ensure robust and consistent procedures for declaration of interest and conflict of interest. This process should include full disclosure of any potential or existing conflict of interest and we request that at least this standard be applied immediately to the AHTEGs and online discussion forums.

We note that the rules of procedure of both the Compliance Committees of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their

Utilization address conflict of interest. In addition, the Guidelines for the Roster of Biosafety Expertsiv places obligations on individuals on the roster to disclose interests and decline “any assignment where an assignment may raise a real or perceived conflict of interest.”

We further note that pursuant to Decision BS-VII/4, the Roster of Biosafety Experts was expanded to include experts nominated by Parties and other Governments to participate in ad hoc technical expert groups and networks under the Cartagena Protocol. This demonstrates a clear rationale for disclosure and conflict of interest procedures to apply also to the AHTEGs.

We believe that a framework for addressing disclosure and conflict of interest in the CBD and its subsidiary bodies should include the following elements:

- A definition of conflict of interest for the purposes of the implementation of such a framework;
- A procedure to require disclosure of interests by an actor seeking to hold a decision making position, in advance of appointment, and an active register of interests being kept during the term of their appointment;
- A procedure to ensure full disclosure of any potential or existing conflict of interest by any person participating in CBD processes;
- A procedure to identify, avoid and manage conflicts of interest between the interests of a non-Party observer (particularly business, commercial and financial interests) and the objective, purpose and principles of the Convention;
- A procedure to identify, avoid and manage other risks, such as undue influence of business, commercial and financial interests, associated with participation of non-Party observers;
- A set of provisions to ensure the implementation of due diligence, transparency and accountability of all the actors involved in such participation, with a view to safeguarding the integrity of the CBD;
- A mechanism for the monitoring and review of the implementation of the framework itself.

We believe that the events cited above demand a strong response from the CBD to demonstrate that it is committed to upholding the highest standards of transparency and integrity.

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you during SBSTTA-21, where several of us would be present, to discuss these issues and assist you as appropriate in taking the lead on disclosure and conflict of interest standards.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Yours sincerely,

African Centre for Biodiversity

Friends of the Earth U.S.

Corporate Europe Observatory

Heinrich Böll Foundation

Econexus

Sustainability Council of New Zealand

Ecoropa

Testbiotech

ETC Group

Third World Network

For more background:

www.etcgroup.org/content/gene-drive-files

genedrivefiles.synbiowatch.org

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Submissions are welcome from all civil society groups.

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MARGINALISING – sorry: Mainstreaming biodiversity in the energy and mining, infrastructure, manufacturing and processing, and health sectors

Helena Paul, EcoNexus

Document SBSTTA-21-05 clearly states:

From the perspective of the Convention, a key aim of mainstreaming biodiversity in these sectors is to avoid, reduce or mitigate any negative impacts, while maximizing any potential benefits to biodiversity.’

Yet, it also notes that development in most of these sectors is scheduled to be intense in coming decades, for example:

It is estimated that by 2050, 25 million kilometres of new roads will be built. This represents a 60 per cent increase in global road infrastructure since 2010. It is further estimated that 90 per cent of new road construction will occur in developing countries, many of which are exceptionally high in biodiversity.¹

It seems mainstreaming allows these activities to proceed, so long as they make some gesture towards protecting biodiversity.

Global Biodiversity Outlook 3 (GBO, 2010) showed we were already breaching planetary boundaries. GBO3 also states that humanity’s increasing consumption of resources outweighs our attempts to improve resource efficiency.

Have we made any real progress in reducing humanity’s ecological footprint since 2010?

We must **avoid** additional impacts of the scale predicted, not merely reduce or mitigate them. We depend on biodiversity for our lives and we cannot afford to continue fragmenting and destroying it as we have done hitherto, especially since climate change is a grave threat to biodiversity and healthy ecosystems can help us to adapt to climate change. The CBD has an obligation to speak out strongly.

SBSTTA-21-05 is rightly critical of renewables such as bio-fuels and hydropower, which cause multiple problems of their own. However, there is plenty of research to show that offsets and *No Net Loss* or *Net Positive Impact* do not actually address the impacts of development, so it is worrying to read that some 100 countries are developing policies to encourage the use of offsets while no mention is made of civil society’s concerns about this policy. Similarly, ‘natural capital’ and tools such as InVEST (integrated valuation of ecosystem services and trade-offs) suggest

that one piece of biodiversity can be traded against another, but biodiversity and ecosystems cannot be treated like products in the market. Finally carbon capture and storage will not address the problem of climate change even supposing it actually works at all.

Instead, we need profound changes in the dominant model of development, which is so dependent on energy, whether fossil or renewable. Fulfilment of Aichi Target 3 on the elimination of harmful incentives and subsidies is vital.

Otherwise development will far outpace any attempt to protect biodiversity and ecosystems, including Indigenous Peoples, local communities and their cultures, from fragmentation and outright destruction.

This has particular implications for the global north, which should unilaterally reduce its massive consumption of energy and materials. At the same time, we must address inequality and injustice. Those who do not have enough must be enabled to improve their quality of life. We must support peasant farmers, mainly women, their seeds and knowledge, fishers and pastoralists because these are the ones who really feed the world and all this must happen within planetary boundaries. These are not small challenges but vital to all our futures.

The suggested recommendations involve no action other than sharing information. We are definitely beyond the point where this is sufficient. Transformational change is required. We therefore urge SBSTTA and the Secretariat to expand and improve this text considerably before it is handed over to SBI-2.

Suggested improvements to the text of SBSTTA-21-05

based on suggestions made in the ‘Report of the European Expert Meeting in Preparation of SBSTTA-21 November 1 - 3, 2017’, notably to:

- complete and update background information in a balanced way;
- address the need for system change to reduce pressures emanating from these sectors;
- assess the factors for each sector that hinder mainstreaming; and
- develop a programmatic approach to mainstreaming based on the completed information.

¹ <https://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v513/n7517/full/nature13717.html>