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Upholding the spirit, substance, and terminology of the KMGBF

Discontinue inappropriate use of “Actors Other than National Governments” (AONG)

*Joint views from the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB),
the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN), the CBD Women’s Caucus, and the CBD Alliance.*

The term “Actors Other than National Governments” should not be used across CBD agenda items, outside of the context of the communication of commitments.

The terminology “Actors other than national governments” (AONG) was originally used in the context of the communication of commitments. We oppose the use of this term beyond this context because it is vague, obscures differentiated roles, rights, needs and responsibilities, and leads to unclear guidance for Parties, the Secretariat, and the diverse actors involved. Furthermore, it promotes binary thinking between national governments and everyone else, which is too simplistic for a Convention and Framework that relies on action and ownership from diverse and distinct actors and sectors from the whole-of-society to achieve its objectives.

In most cases where the term “actors other than national governments” is used, we propose the use of the language “major groups and other stakeholders.”

The whole-of-society is integral and vital for KMGBF implementation, but diverse social actors have specific roles and special contributions according to their relationships with nature, competence, knowledge systems, priorities, and needs. The language “**major groups and other stakeholders**” acknowledges the distinctiveness of these groups, their common recognition as actors more than simply “not-a-government”, while still allowing for simpler language that could facilitate negotiations.

This terminology is already widely used and universally understood in different UN spaces, in particular by the UN General Assembly in the SDG context (See: Agenda 21 and General Assembly Resolutions 66/288, 67/290, 70/1, 70/299 and 72/305), as well as by UNEP. This list of major groups refers to Indigenous Peoples, Farmers, Women, Children and Youth, Workers and Trade Unions, Non-governmental organizations, Local Authorities, Scientific and technological community, Business and Industry, while other stakeholders are mentioned [here](#).

It remains critical to name key actors, including indigenous peoples and local communities, women, youth and/or persons with disabilities, as appropriate.

Decisions under the CBD must continue to be nuanced and carefully considered based on the context. Negotiations must consider appropriate language for specific cases. For instance, in light of Targets 1, 3, 21, and 22, Indigenous Peoples and local communities have specific rights and roles in relation to lands, territories, resources, and traditional knowledge. When referring to participation in decision-making, this must be considered in light of KMGBF Target 22, which considers the full, equitable, inclusive, gender-responsive and effective representation and participation of indigenous peoples and local communities, women, youth and persons with disabilities. Additionally, Target 23, recognizes women’s and girls’ equal rights and access to land and natural resources. References to means of implementation must also acknowledge the roles and needs of indigenous peoples and local communities, women, and youth, as referred to in CBD studies and decision [16/34](#).

Capacity Building or Corporate Capture?

The Fight Over Synthetic Biology at COP17

Dana Perls (Friends of the Earth US)

Developing countries have long called for predictable finance, equitable access to appropriate technologies, scientific cooperation and stronger regulatory capacity to conserve biodiversity and secure fair benefits from genetic resources. At COP17, the question is what kind of capacity will be built - and for whose benefit. The *Thematic Action Plan on Synthetic Biology* (TAP) could strengthen countries' ability to assess, regulate and, where necessary, reject synthetic biology applications. Yet it currently leans towards technology development. Where organisms may persist and spread, precaution must come first.

Synthetic biology redesigns genetic material, organisms and biological systems. Applications include gene drives, engineered microorganisms and genetically engineered pesticides. Combined with artificial intelligence, automated DNA synthesis and proprietary biofoundries, it aims to make living systems programmable and commercially scalable - raising serious concerns when genetic resources, traditional knowledge and biological functions become patentable digital assets.

COP17 will help determine whether biodiversity policy prioritises technological interventions or tackles the structural causes of biodiversity loss. Evidence for many claimed benefits remains limited, while methods for assessing irreversible impacts and addressing liability, redress and benefit-sharing remain inadequate. Technological responses must not displace action on industrial agriculture, extractivism, pollution, dispossession and corporate concentration.

The TAP could shape policy and finance

Although non-binding, the TAP could shape national policy, research priorities, partnerships and finance, including through the Global Environment Facility and the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund. Adoption by the Conference of the Parties would give it greater authority, but even a decision merely taking note of it could influence investment and technology transfer. The bracketed draft decision text therefore matters: it reflects a deeper choice between facilitating the development and use of synthetic biology and prioritising the precautionary

approach, independent risk assessment, regulatory oversight and the sovereign decision-making of Parties.

Organisms developed through synthetic biology may persist, cross borders and cause irreversible harm. The technology may also enable access to genetic resources, traditional knowledge and data without meaningful consent or equitable benefit-sharing. Patents, proprietary platforms and public-private partnerships may further concentrate control in corporations and Northern research networks. Biodiversity-rich countries must remain sovereign decision-makers - not sources of biological material, testing grounds or recipients of externally defined technologies.

COP17 can address these concerns through clear safeguards. The CBD should not present synthetic biology as inevitable while its benefits and consequences remain uncertain. Precaution must apply before research and finance create technological lock-in—not only at environmental release. Field trials or deployment should not proceed where biodiversity, livelihoods or rights may be threatened. Proponents should bear the burden of demonstrating safety and public benefit.

What COP17 must do

The TAP should centre precaution, public-interest governance and sovereign decision-making. Capacity-building and public finance should support independent horizon scanning, assessment, monitoring, biosafety regulation, liability and redress. Donor-supported pilots, commercial partnerships and biofoundries must not foster dependency or narrow national policy space. Parties and affected communities must retain the authority to withhold approval and reject deployment.

COP17 should affirm national sovereignty over genetic resources, the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilisation, prior informed consent, and the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. It should also ensure that the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources does not circumvent access and benefit-sharing obligations. Public resources should support agroecology, farmer-

managed seed systems, community-led conservation and locally determined innovation. Negotiators should resolve the bracketed draft decision text in favour of the precautionary approach, public accountability and regulatory autonomy - not technology promotion. Sound

governance rests on ecological integrity, democratic accountability and the sovereign right to say no.

More info at
<https://acbio.org.za/gm-biosafety/synthetic-biology-at-cbd-cop17>



Marginalizing the Science of Indigenous Sustainability: Intention or Ignorance

Dipayan Dey & Mrinmoyee Naskar (ICARSI)

Indigenous science infused in *Traditional Ecological Knowledge* (TEK) provide high-impact, cost-effective solutions for climate change mitigation, biodiversity protection, and ecosystem resilience. However, it has been deliberately ignored and intentionally marginalised in sustainable climate practices owing to vested interests of the stewards of consumer economies and corporate lobbies.

Indigenous Peoples and local communities manage nearly 42% of the Earth's land surface and protect over 36% to 80% of the world's remaining intact forests and vital carbon sinks. Though they do not have the leverages of the carbon economy or biodiversity financing mechanisms as yet. Ecosystems managed by Indigenous communities consistently exhibit higher biodiversity and better ecological health than surrounding non-indigenous lands. Time-tested methods include cultural burning to prevent catastrophic wildfires, agroforestry, drought-resistant crop cultivation, intercropping, and sustainable water management. Multigenerational observations of weather patterns, animal behaviours, and seasonal shifts act as localized early warning systems for environmental changes.

Even then, it has been ignored or marginalized, because of the colonial paradigms, wherein western scientific and policy frameworks have historically treated Indigenous knowledge as anecdotal or secondary, rather than as rigorous science in its own right. Despite managing critical carbon-dense regions, Indigenous Peoples are frequently left out of formal international climate negotiations, conservation planning, and direct climate financing. More so, academics and corporations have sometimes extracted Indigenous data or traditional knowledge without securing free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) or respecting collective land rights.

Corporate interests often conflict with the rights and

safeties of IPLCs and ignores nature conservation because market-driven frameworks prioritize financial risk management and profit protection over direct ecological restoration. Market tools like biodiversity offsets, credits, and green bonds treat nature as a tradable asset, which accelerates deterioration of nature's goods and services instead of preventing it, thereby impacting the life and livelihood of indigenous communities. More recently, militarization in transborder habitats or within *Terre Nuila*, the '*no-man's lands*' between countries has adversely impacting the rangelands and transhumance. Explicit cases are being heard in Indo-Sino borders, Indo-Myanmar borders, Armenia and Azerbaijan and as well in Latin American landscapes.

Voluntary frameworks like the *Taskforce on Nature-Related Financial Disclosures* (TNFD) frame biodiversity loss as a financial threat to company profits rather than addressing how corporate operations actively destroy ecosystems. UN reports show companies fail to adequately analyze supply chain impacts on biodiversity despite recognizing nature as a top global risk. Heavy reliance on corporate self-reporting and industry-led initiatives allows for superficial compliance while marginalizing Indigenous communities and independent scientific experts.

However, there has been no significant change in global fund allocations in Biodiversity, Land degradation, and for IPLCs. Except for the fact that 20% aspirational target across the GEF Family of Funds has been planned for actions by Indigenous Peoples and local communities, though this is inadvertently missing as a fiscal portfolio. The question that still remains is, how would the IPLCs be mainstreamed to access this resource, will it again be in the hands of corporate mediators or 'agencies' who are still far from the socio-ecological production landscapes inhabited by the IPLCs, strategizing resource management in urban context?

Where is the Accountability?

Parties Are Violating the Decision on GE Trees

Anne Petermann (*Campaign to STOP GE Trees*)

In 2008, at COP9 in Bonn, the Convention on Biological Diversity agreed to take a precautionary approach to *genetically engineered (GE) trees* (decision IX/5). They recognized serious uncertainties about the long-term and transboundary impacts of GE trees on forest biodiversity and the livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. That decision has served as a *de facto* global moratorium. As Parties gather in Yerevan for the first global review of the *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*, it is being openly ignored.

Brazil, a Party to the Convention, is the starkest case. Since 2015, its National Technical Biosafety Commission (CTNBio) has issued eleven approvals for GE eucalyptus developed by FuturaGene, biotech subsidiary of pulp giant Suzano. The trees are engineered for faster growth, tolerance to herbicides such as glyphosate, and insect resistance; one is the world's first tree stacking all three traits. In February 2026, CTNBio approved a CRISPR gene-edited eucalyptus.

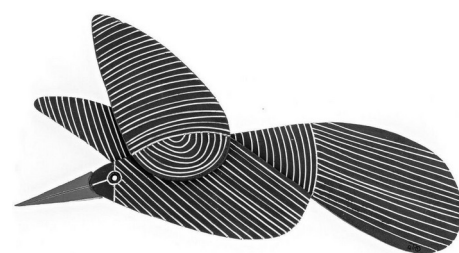
These trees would intensify one of Brazil's most destructive land uses. Indigenous, Quilombola and peasant communities call Suzano's eucalyptus monocultures "green deserts": plantations that dry up springs, are sprayed with pesticides from planes and drones, and have pushed communities off their territories. Faster-growing trees demand more water. Herbicide-tolerant trees mean more herbicide. Unlike annual crops, trees live for decades and spread pollen over long distances. Once GE trees escape, there is no recall. Increasingly, these plantations are also being marketed as "carbon removal," dressing up land grabs as climate action.

The United States, which has never ratified the CBD, is moving in the same direction. On 27 August 2026, the US Department of Agriculture deregulated the "Darling 54" GE American chestnut, engineered with a wheat gene to tolerate blight, after abandoning a full Environmental Impact Statement. Only an Environmental Protection Agency review now stands before wide distribution. Unlike plantation eucalyptus, this tree is meant to be planted into native forests and to spread there on its own. Its review was itself troubled: years of research turned out to have been conducted on a different line than the one originally submitted for approval. A decision of this kind by a major biotech power sets a precedent that Parties will be pressured to follow.

Indigenous Peoples, whose territories hold much of the world's remaining biodiversity, are sounding the alarm. In 2024, at the *UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues*, Indigenous leaders launched a global campaign against GE trees, and the then-*UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* warned that GMO forests must not be allowed.

Precaution means nothing if Parties can disregard it without consequence. We call on all Parties to immediately cancel any testing of, licenses for, or commercial approval of GE trees, including gene-edited trees, and to implement the precautionary principle in good faith.

COP17 should reaffirm decision IX/5, ask the Secretariat to report on Parties' compliance with it, and ensure no GE tree is released without the free, prior and informed consent of affected Indigenous Peoples and local communities.



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We thank the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung for their financial support.

Submissions are welcome from all civil society groups.

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